

DUNGEON

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IN THE MOOD

I've had the recent good fortune to enjoy a vacation. I went to Kauai, in Hawaii, and while I was there, I got to thinking about D&D. Yes, I am that much of a geek.

It rains a lot on Kauai, mostly in fierce bursts that last, at most, for a few hours. Sometimes it rains longer. Sometimes it's just a passing shower that lasts no more than a few seconds. Then the sun comes back.

Seattle's a little different. Here we get gray skies for days on end. And rain—lots of rain. The rain doesn't typically come in fierce bursts. It's usually more of a protracted drizzle. It's the price we pay for living near the water between two amazing mountain ranges, and for enjoying an utter lack of deadly hurricanes and tornadoes. But I digress.

My point is that these two distinct parts of the world feel different, and it's not just the weather. There's something about these climates—they affect dress, skin tone, attitude, cuisine. The differences are abundant. Sometimes they're subtle, sometimes they're obvious. But they're all around you, available to experience with all your five senses.

That full range of sensory input isn't a luxury we often get at the D&D table, when we DMs are asked to convey the atmosphere or tone of an adventure using just our voices. Sure, sometimes we'll pull out different tricks to add to the experience—a custom soundtrack, maybe some art or maps—but it's tough. More often than not, in my experience, DMs either forget or neglect to address this in the adventures they run precisely because it is so difficult.

To this end, I've decided to start a new exercise before each of my sessions. I'm going to take a couple of minutes and really envision myself in the adventure I'm running, specifically focusing on three elements: setting, level, and the adventure's specific style.

Setting: I want to put myself, momentarily, into the boots of my adventurers. I want to think about what the air feels like. Is it hot or cold? Dry or humid? What does

it smell like here? Are there irritants around? Bugs? Sand in my sandals? And what are the locals—monsters and NPCs—wearing? How do they cope? What impact has this region had on their culture? Their dress? Their mannerisms?

Level: We've said since 4th Edition launched that each tier of play should feel like a different experience. At paragon tier, the stakes the heroes are facing should be bigger—regional rather than local. At epic, all bets are off. The world (or perhaps more than one world) is at stake. How can I convey that in play? Who will suffer should the adventurers fail? Who stands to gain if they succeed?

Style: Chris Perkins recently ran a Halloween-themed adventure in our Wednesday game. We faced a horde of Nerull cultists trying to resurrect their dead god, possessed townsfolk (real, genuine pod people thanks to a local vine horror), and for good measure, an undead beholder. But the adventure was creepy as hell. Chris spent a lot of time describing the most disturbing bits in detail. By the end, having liberated the town, we still couldn't wait to see it in our rearview mirror. This month's Chaos Scar adventure, "The Tainted Spiral," is an adventure featuring aberrant creatures. Stylistically, mind flayers and their ilk have occupied a great, Lovecraftian horror space in D&D since its earliest days. What about other adventures? Surely, each one has some sort of theme or tone? How can I identify and communicate it?

We can get caught up in the minutiae of running an adventure or an encounter, making it easy to overlook the big picture. But it's the big picture elements that will create an engaging, immersive experience for your players, and that's what will make your adventure memorable.





HEROIC

1-10

A Chaos Scar Adventure

THE TAINTED SPIRAL

“The Tainted Spiral” is a short adventure for five 1st-level characters that takes place in the Chaos Scar. The adventure is set in a spiraling network of tunnels carved a by a piece of the great meteor, called a Chaos Shard, that broke away when the comet crashed to the earth. Like the meteorite itself, the Chaos Shard is a malevolent force of chaos and evil that draws other evil creatures to it. The presence of the Chaos Shard has weakened the barrier between the world and the Far Realm, creating rifts in reality that have allowed a number of fell taints and other terrible aberrations to heed the shard’s call...



By Aeryn “Blackdirge” Rudel

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For details on the Chaos Scar and its environs, read the [Chaos Scar introduction](#) and check out the map of the entire valley.

If you're not playing a Chaos Scar campaign, you can still use this adventure by integrating it into any existing campaign situated near a wilderness area. Unlike some Chaos Scar adventures, its premise relies somewhat on the presence of an active chunk of the meteor. If you use the adventure somewhere other than the Chaos Scar, you'll want to invent your own explanation for the presence of the shard golem in the final encounter.

BACKGROUND

When the meteor fell from the heavens, it shed many small fragments, or Chaos Shards, scattering them across the land and the Chaos Scar itself. The largest portion of the meteor ripped the great furrow in the earth that is now called the Chaos Scar. One of the Chaos Shards landed not far from the mouth of the Chaos Scar, where the King's Wall now stands. There, it began to burrow into the earth, carving a twisting pattern of tunnels deep into the ground. At the bottom of a maddening, spiraling network of caverns and passageways, the shard slowly began to increase in power.

Shortly after coming to rest at the bottom of the network of tunnels the energy of the Chaos Shard caused clusters of crystals to grow throughout its domain. Called warp crystals by the races of the Underdark, these strange luminous crystals grow in areas with a strong connection to the Far Realm. The strange properties of warp crystal strengthen creatures from the Far Realm while weakening those native to other planes of existence.

The Chaos Shard exudes a malevolent aura of evil and chaos, and although it is not truly sentient, it does possess a crude, malignant will that draws other evil creatures to it. Recently, the combined influences of the Chaos Shard and the warp crystals have weakened the barriers between the world and the Far Realm, allowing a small group of fell taints, drawn by the power of the Chaos Shard, to pass into the mortal realm. The dim-witted fell taints, believing the Chaos Shard to be a god, now worship it and seek to please it by offering up mortal sacrifices. The fell taints have been venturing out and attacking travelers near the King's Wall, and their victims are carried back to the spiral and either devoured or presented to the Chaos Shard as gruesome gifts.

Over the last few weeks, the fell taints have grown bolder with their raids. Tales of horrific tentacled monstrosities attacking travelers in the dead of night are being spread, and a pall of fear has settled over the area.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The adventurers find the entrance to the spiral of tunnels carved by the Chaos Shard and enter. Inside, they must deal with the fell taints that worship the Shard, as well as some immature chuuls that have traveled to the area via a small underground stream. Eventually, they reach the depths of the spiral and face the Chaos Shard itself, which has grown a strange armor as a defense against attackers.

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

"The Tainted Spiral" takes place in the Chaos Scar. You can use one of the hooks below to get the PCs into the valley and into the dungeon. Two of these hooks also come with a minor quest that, if completed, can net the characters some extra experience points.

HOOK 1: STRANGE LIGHTS

This hook can be used when the adventurers are already in the Chaos Scar. The PCs see a strange, bluish glow in the distance that looks like no light they have ever seen. As they travel closer to the source of the light, allow the heroes to make a DC 15 Dungeoneering check to learn that the light is magical and extraplanar in nature, and can be tied to the Far Realm. Star pact warlocks or sorcerers with the Wild Magic class feature can make a DC 15 Arcana check to obtain the same information.

HOOK 2: MISSING MERCHANTS

The PCs are approached by a young elven woman named Ardia Ironleaf. She is the daughter of Tarthias Ironleaf, the head of a small but profitable elven trading company that deals exclusively in fine, elven weapons. Tarthias has not returned from his last trading expedition, and tales of terrible, tentacled monsters attacking travelers has Ardia very worried, especially since Tarthias' trade route takes him close to the King's Wall. Ardia asks the PCs to find her father, and if her worst fears are true, to return his signet ring to her. She offers the PCs 100 gp and a 15% discount on any goods sold by the Ironleaf Trading Company if they can discover the fate of her father.

Quest XP: 250 XP for discovering the fate of Tarthias Ironleaf or 500 XP for returning his signet ring to Ardia.

HOOK 3: THE CHAOS CONNECTION

Ivian the Unpredictable is a notable sorcerer whose specializes in wild magic; he has sensed the energy given off by the warp crystals and has come to the conclusion that it is connected with the Far Realm. He believes that the energy is radiating from a location in the Chaos Scar and asks the PCs to investigate and discern the source of the energy. He offers 100 gp for the completion of this task. In addition, he will gladly pay another 50 gp for a sample of warp crystal if the PCs bring him some.

Quest XP: 250 XP for discovering the source of the chaos energy or 500 XP for returning a piece of warp crystal to Ivian.

Regardless of what hook you used to get the PCs to explore the tainted spiral, read or paraphrase the following when they reach the first encounter area:

Strange blue light spills out of the ragged, gaping entrance to this cave. The light creates strange, twisting shadows that bear little resemblance to the people and things casting them. Your skin crawls wherever the light touches it, and an overwhelming feeling of "wrongness" permeates the area, filling you with an indescribable dread.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE TUNNELS

If you would like to add a little more danger to the twisting tunnels that connect the encounter areas in the spiral, consider adding a brief encounter with a small group of fell taints in the narrow confines of the spiral. The PCs might trigger this encounter on their own if they fail the Navigating the Tainted Spiral skill challenge (encounter T1). In that case, it is recommended that you don't use this encounter again to avoid draining the PCs' resources and decreasing their chances of completing the final encounter.

TREASURE PREPARATION

"The Tainted Spiral" uses the treasure parcel system described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. The PCs should gain a total of three treasure parcels in this adventure. Listed below are the most likely places to find parcels and what those treasure parcels might contain.

Parcel 1: The Larder	100 gp and 200 sp
Parcel 2: The Silent Stream	Two potions of healing and one 100-gp gem
Parcel 3: Cavern of the Shard	One level 4 magic item

CONCLUSION: WHAT TO DO WITH THE CHAOS SHARD?

Once the final blow is struck against the shard golem, its crystalline body shatters, leaving the Chaos Shard exposed and vulnerable. The Chaos Shard might be difficult to differentiate from the rest of the shards of warp crystal, but characters can make a DC 10 Perception check to notice that the Chaos Shard glows a bit brighter than the pieces of warp crystal around it. It shouldn't be difficult for the PCs to ascertain that the Chaos Shard is a piece of the great meteor, similar to other shards they might have seen after other adventures in the Chaos Scar (see "Den of the Slave-Takers" or "Death in the Pincers"). A DC 15 Arcana check reveals that it was controlling the shard golem.

Now that the PCs have the Chaos Shard, they can either destroy it, putting an end to a growing evil, or they can attempt to harness the shard's power for themselves. Astute PCs should realize that the Chaos Shard is irrevocably evil, and that should they keep it, even to pursue good purposes, other creatures of evil will be drawn to the shard user—something you can use as a springboard for many future adventures.

DESTROYING THE SHARD

If the PCs decide to destroy the Chaos Shard, they immediately learn that this shard, similar to some and unlike others, is virtually immune to anything they can throw at it. However, the Chaos Shard is vulnerable to thunder damage and can be shattered and destroyed with concentrated attacks using that energy type. A DC 17 Arcana check is sufficient to reveal

its vulnerability. For the purposes of destruction, the Chaos Shard is a small object with the following statistics: AC 10; Fortitude 10; HP 50; Resist 20 all (except thunder); Vulnerable 10 thunder.

If the PCs discover the Chaos Shard's weakness and begin attacking it with thunder damage, it fills the minds of every PC within 5 squares with raw emotions of hatred and pain. Once the final blow is struck, the Chaos Shard shatters and unleashes a final telepathic scream before falling silent forever. For destroying the Chaos Shard's evil, award the characters 250 XP.

KEEPING THE SHARD

If the PCs decide to keep the Chaos Shard, they can harness its power for their own uses. The shard can be fitted to a non-magical rod, staff, or wand and will then function as a magical version of any of those implements as follows:

Chaos Shard Implement Level 5+

This glowing lump of blue crystal can be fitted to a rod, staff, or wand, allowing its user to channel the power for the Far Realm to smite enemies.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Implement (Rod, Staff, or Wand)

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d6 psychic damage per plus

Property: When you use this implement to attack with an arcane power with the psychic keyword, you can gain an item bonus to damage rolls on that attack equal to this implement's enhancement bonus. When you gain the damage bonus, you also gain vulnerable 5 psychic damage until the start of your next turn. If you are a warlock with the star pact or a sorcerer with the Wild Magic class feature, you do not gain the vulnerable psychic.

Power (Daily ♦ Psychic): Free Action: Use this power when you hit with an arcane power with the psychic keyword. The power deals an additional 1d10 psychic damage.
Level 15 or 20: 2d10 psychic damage.
Level 25 or 30: 3d10 psychic damage.

If you'd like this Chaos Shard to exert more of an influence in your campaign, you could decide it continues to grow in power and tries to influence the actions of the character using it. The shard is not truly sentient, but it is filled with a crude malevolence. If you like the sound of that option, consider giving the shard the following attack that triggers when the character uses the shard's daily power. The hero who uses the shard remains unaware of this effect until the first time he or she triggers it.

Chaos Shard Attack (Charm): **Trigger:** The Chaos Shard's wielder uses its daily power to add extra psychic damage to an attack. **Attack:** +8 vs Will; **Hit:** the wielder makes an immediate attack with an at-will arcane power as a free action against its nearest ally.

Level 10: +13 vs. Will
Level 15: +18 vs. Will
Level 20: +23 vs. Will
Level 25: +28 vs. Will
Level 30: +33 vs. Will

T1. TUNNEL TROUBLE

Encounter Level 1 (XP 525)

- 1 fell taint thought eater
- 2 fell taint pulsars
- 2 fell taint lashers

SETUP

The PCs encounter a small group of fell taints in the narrow tunnels of the tainted spiral. The portion of tunnel where this encounter takes place is 15 feet wide, 50 feet long, and has a 10-foot ceiling. The floor is relatively clear of debris (no difficult terrain). The fell taints start at one end of the tunnel and the PCs at the other.

When the PCs see the fell taints read:

Ahead of you, the tunnel suddenly widens considerably, giving you space to move around a bit. Unfortunately, a group of squirming, tentacled monstrosities is also enjoying the extra room.

TACTICS

The fell taints try to remain at their end of the tunnel, peppering the PCs with ranged attacks. If the PCs respond with powerful ranged attacks of their own, the fell taints lashers rush forward to engage the heroes in melee, while the pulsars and thought eater hang back and continue to attack from a distance.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The tunnels are dimly lit with small clusters of warp crystals.

Fell Taint Thought Eater		Level 2 Controller
Small aberrant magical beast		XP 125
Initiative +2	Senses Perception +6	
HP 26; Bloodied 13		
AC 14; Fortitude 13, Reflex 13, Will 15		
Resist insubstantial; Vulnerable 5 psychic		
Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)		
⬇️ Tendril Caress (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
+6 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 5 psychic damage.		
✈️ Spirit Haze (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
Ranged 10; +6 vs. Will; 1d4 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the fell taint thought eater's next turn.		
⬅️ Thought Fog (standard; recharge ⓧⓧ) ♦ Psychic, Charm		
Close blast 5; targets enemies; +5 vs. Will; the target is slowed (save ends). <i>First Failed Saving Throw:</i> The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends).		
Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ♦ Healing		
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint thought eater loses insubstantial and its fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the thought eater kills the target, it regains all of its hit points.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Str 11 (+1)	Dex 12 (+2)	Wis 10 (+1)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 5 (-2)	Cha 16 (+4)

2 Fell Taint Lashers		Level 1 Soldier
Small aberrant magical beast		XP 100
Initiative +3	Senses Perception +8	
HP 20; Bloodied 10		
AC 15; Fortitude 12, Reflex 12, Will 14		
Resist insubstantial; Vulnerable 5 psychic		
Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)		
⬇️ Tendril Caress (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
+5 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 psychic damage.		
⬇️ Tendrils of Stasis (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
+5 vs. Will; 1d4 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the fell taint lasher's next turn.		
Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ♦ Healing		
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint lasher loses insubstantial and its fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the lasher kills the target, it regains all of its hit points.		
Flowing Tendrils (free, when the fell taint lasher makes an opportunity attack; at-will)		
The lasher shifts 1 square.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Str 11 (+0)	Dex 12 (+1)	Wis 16 (+3)
Con 13 (+1)	Int 4 (-3)	Cha 10 (+0)

2 Fell Taint Pulsars		Level 1 Artillery
Small aberrant magical beast		XP 100
Initiative +2	Senses Perception +8	
HP 18; Bloodied 9		
AC 12; Fortitude 11, Reflex 12, Will 14		
Resist insubstantial; Vulnerable 5 psychic		
Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)		
⬇️ Tendril Caress (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
+4 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + 3 psychic damage.		
⌚ Tendril Pulse (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
Ranged 20; +6 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 3 psychic damage.		
✈️ Tendril Flurry (standard; recharge ⓧⓧ) ♦ Psychic		
Ranged 10; targets one, two, or three creatures; +4 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 1 psychic damage.		
Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ♦ Healing		
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint pulsar loses insubstantial and its fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the pulsar kills the target, it regains all of its hit points.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Skills Stealth +7		
Str 11 (+0)	Dex 14 (+2)	Wis 16 (+3)
Con 13 (+1)	Int 4 (-3)	Cha 10 (+0)

T2. THE LARDER

Encounter Level 2 (XP 675)

- 1 dimensional marauder (D)
- 3 fell taint lashers (L)
- 2 fell taint pulsars (P)

SETUP

This cavern opens up into the Chaos Scar valley, and the light from the warp crystals within can be seen for almost a mile. The fell taints have been using this area as a larder of sorts, and a number of corpses lie at the northern end of the cavern. Currently a group of fell taints and a dimensional marauder are feasting on the corpses, but they are quite pleased that fresher fare has seen fit to show up on their doorstep.

The fell taints and the dimensional marauder are not expecting intruders nor are they intelligent enough to set any kind of watch. However, the fell taints are fairly perceptive with a passive Perception of 18 to oppose the characters' Stealth checks if the heroes attempt to surprise them.

When the characters enter the cavern, read:

A bright bluish light emanates from two clusters of jagged crystals in this wide cavern. A small, murky pool sits in one corner, and a narrow tunnel runs away into darkness at the northern end of the cavern. The bright illumination allows you to plainly see a ghoulish sight: six humanoid corpses lay in a tangled heap in the center of the cavern. Even from this distance you can tell that the corpses have been partially devoured.

Floating above the corpses are five horrific creatures, each little more than a wild tangle of squirming tentacles and lurid red eyes. Staring directly at one of these monstrosities sends a jagged spike of a pain through your mind as you try to discern some rational form in the twisting mass. Your eyes and mind find no relief in the other denizen of this cavern: a squat bipedal monster that is little more than a fanged maw with legs.

3 Fell Taint Lashers (L)		Level 1 Soldier
Small aberrant magical beast		XP 100 each
Initiative +3	Senses Perception +8	
HP 20; Bloodied 10		
AC 15; Fortitude 12, Reflex 12, Will 14		
Resist insubstantial; Vulnerable 5 psychic		
Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)		
⊕ Tendril Caress (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
+5 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 psychic damage.		
⊕ Tendrils of Stasis (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
+5 vs. Will; 1d4 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the fell taint lasher's next turn.		
Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ♦ Healing		
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint lasher loses insubstantial and its fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the lasher kills the target, it regains all of its hit points.		
Flowing Tendrils (free, when the fell taint lasher makes an opportunity attack; at-will)		
The lasher shifts 1 square.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages —
Str 11 (+0)	Dex 12 (+1)	Wis 16 (+3)
Con 13 (+1)	Int 4 (-3)	Cha 10 (+0)

2 Fell Taint Pulsars (P)		Level 1 Artillery
Small aberrant magical beast		XP 100 each
Initiative +2 Senses Perception +8		
HP 18; Bloodied 9		
AC 12; Fortitude 11, Reflex 12, Will 14		
Resist insubstantial; Vulnerable 5 psychic		
Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)		
Ⓢ Tendril Caress (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
+4 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + 3 psychic damage.		
Ⓢ Tendril Pulse (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
Ranged 20; +6 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 3 psychic damage.		
Ⓢ Tendril Flurry (standard; recharge Ⓢ Ⓢ) ♦ Psychic		
Ranged 10; targets one, two, or three creatures; +4 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 1 psychic damage.		
Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ♦ Healing		
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint pulsar loses insubstantial and its fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the pulsar kills the target, it regains all of its hit points.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Skills Stealth +7		
Str 11 (+0)	Dex 14 (+2)	Wis 16 (+3)
Con 13 (+1)	Int 4 (-3)	Cha 10w(+0)

TACTICS

The monsters here have no goal other than to kill and devour the characters. Although the fell taints and dimensional marauder are not particularly intelligent, they are cunning combatants and have learned a few things about fighting humanoids from attacking travelers near the King's Wall.

When combat begins, the fell taint pulsars move to hover near the ceiling (see Features of the Area) and target the adventurers with *tendril flurry*. The fell taint lashers hold their position to allow the fell taint pulsars to soften up the heroes before entering melee. Finally, the dimensional marauder uses *plane phase form* to become insubstantial.

During combat, the fell taint pulsars continue to attack the characters with *tendril pulse* and *tendril*

flurry when it recharges, focusing their attacks on any heroes that demonstrate effective ranged attacks. The fell taint lashers use *tendrils of stasis* as often as possible to keep the characters immobilized, and generally focus their attacks on the closest enemy. The dimensional marauder uses *reality warp* to teleport the closest foe and itself as far away from the other heroes as possible. It then uses its fearsome bite attack on the isolated character, using *planeplane form* again to escape heroes that come to its victim's aid.

The fell taints fight to the death to defend their lair and their new god, but they make liberal use of *fell taint feeding* to stay in the fight. However, when reduced to 15 hit points or less, the dimensional marauder uses *planeplane form* to escape by phasing through obstacles and walls or teleporting into a place inaccessible to the characters. If the dimensional marauder escapes, it could appear in later encounters, especially if the adventurers are having a particularly easy time in the tainted spiral.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The two clusters of warp crystals here provide bright illumination throughout the entire cavern.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 15 feet high.

Corpses: Squares with corpses in them are considered difficult terrain. The six corpses here are all humans. Two of the corpses are badly decayed and have been mostly devoured by the fell taints and the dimensional marauder. The other four, however, are fairly fresh, and appear to be part of a single group consisting of a pair of merchants and their two guards. If the PCs search these corpses, a DC 10 Perception check reveals a number of documents detailing the nature of the merchants' business. In

Dimensional Marauder (D)		Level 4 Lurker
Medium aberrant magical beast		XP 175
Initiative +10	Senses Perception +5; low-light vision	
HP 45; Bloodied 22		
AC 18; Fortitude 14, Reflex 17, Will 16		
Vulnerable psychic ; a dimensional marauder that takes psychic damage immediately ends <i>planeplane</i> form.		
Speed 7, teleport 3		
⚔ Bite (standard; at-will)		
+9 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage.		
⚡ Reality Warp (standard; usable only while insubstantial; at-will) ⚡ Teleportation		
+7 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the dimensional marauder teleports the target 3 squares. The marauder then teleports 3 squares into a space adjacent to the target.		
Planar Evasion (immediate reaction, when the dimensional marauder is hit by a melee attack; recharge ⏏ ⏏ ⏏) ⚡ Teleportation		
The marauder teleports 3 squares.		
Planeplane Form (standard; at-will)		
The dimensional marauder partially phases into another plane, gaining insubstantial and phasing until the end of its next turn or until it hits or misses with an attack. Sustain Minor: The effect persists.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Deep Speech
Skills Stealth +11		
Str 11 (+2)	Dex 18 (+6)	Wis 16 (+5)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 4 (-1)	Cha 12 (+3)

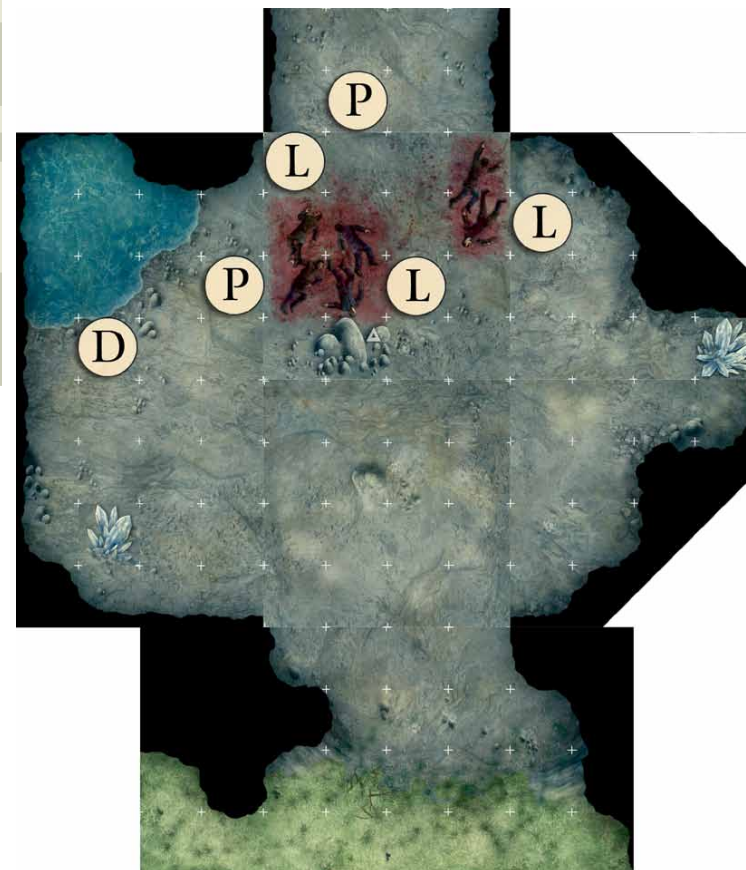
addition, one document is a contract between the merchants and the guards, and it lists the names of all four individuals. If the PCs decide to seek out the families of these individuals and deliver news of their fates, award them 100 XP.

Pool: This small pool is only a few feet deep and is considered difficult terrain.

Rubble: Squares with rubble are considered difficult terrain.

Warp Crystals: The two clusters of warp crystals in this area provide bright illumination out to 10 squares, more than enough to light the entire cavern.

Creatures can move through a square with a cluster of warp crystals, but the square counts as difficult terrain. Warp crystals radiate the dire, chaotic energies of the Far Realm and can have deleterious effects on PCs that get too close to them. Any creature without the aberrant origin that starts its turn adjacent to a cluster of warp crystals takes a -1 penalty to attack rolls until the start of its next turn. Conversely, a creature with the aberrant origin that starts its turn adjacent to a cluster of warp crystals gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls until the start of its next turn.



T3. NAVIGATING THE TAINTED SPIRAL

The dungeon is comprised of three large caverns connected by a series of twisting, narrow tunnels that spiral deeper and deeper into the earth. The first cavern, encounter T2, is at the surface. The tunnels leading deeper into the spiral range from 5 to 15 feet wide and are dimly lit by small clusters of warp crystals. Navigating the tunnels can be both confusing and dangerous, and the heroes could easily become lost or be set upon by fell taints if they make a wrong turn. This skill challenge begins when the heroes enter the spiral after encounter T2, but is broken up by the combat encounters that follow. See Success, below, for details.

Level: 1 (XP 200).

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Arcana, Dungeoneering, Perception.

Arcana (DC 10, 1 success, no maximum): The character's arcane training gives her some familiarity with the energies of the Far Realm, allowing her to detect the source and strength of the energy permeating these tunnels. A star pact warlock or chaos sorcerer gains a +2 bonus on this check.

Dungeoneering (DC 15, 1 success, no maximum): A character's familiarity with subterranean environments allows him to navigate the twisting tunnels. The adventurer detects the subtle downward-sloping grade of the narrow passages and knows that going deeper likely means going in the right direction. In addition, he can sense the dire energy of the Far Realm grow stronger as the party descends into the depths.

Perception (DC 10, 1 success, no maximum): A character might not know much about navigating underground, but his keen eyes and ears allow him to keep track of landmarks, ensuring that the party doesn't wander in circles.

Secondary Skill: Nature.

Nature (DC 5, no successes): Although you are out of your element, your direction sense is good enough to aid a companion skilled at underground navigation. You grant a +2 bonus to one ally's next Dungeoneering check made as part of this skill challenge.

Success: The PCs reach the next encounter area without incident. After the first 2 successes, the characters have successfully found their way through the first half of the tunnels. Proceed to encounter T4. After the next 2 successes, the characters have reached the heart of the spiral. Proceed to encounter T5.

Failure: After blundering around in the darkness for hours, the adventurers wind up back in the encounter area they just left. If they have yet to accumulate enough successes to reach the next encounter area, they lose any gained since that point. They do not lose successes they have accumulated prior to the previous encounter area. For example, if the characters accumulate 2 successes and reach encounter T4, then fail the skill challenge, they find themselves back in the cavern for encounter T4, and are still considered as having 2 successes that count toward overall success in the skill challenge. They lose any success they accumulated between encounters T2 and T3, however. In addition, the characters trigger encounter T1 if they fail, as they run afoul of a group of wandering fell taints. Regardless of how many times they fail the challenge, they only ever deal with encounter T1 once.

T4. THE SILENT STREAM

Encounter Level 1 (XP 575)

- 2 chuul nymphs (N)
- 2 fell taint pulsars (P)
- 1 fell taint thought eater (T)

SETUP

The PCs enter this cavern from the southwest. It exits in the northeast corner via a tunnel heading east. In addition to the fell taints, a pair of chuul nymphs, immature versions of the dreaded aberrant horror, lair in the stream running through the center of the cavern. The fell taints and the nymphs are not exactly allies, but the fell taints are happy to feed on the scraps left by the voracious nymphs.

The chuul nymphs lurk in the stream with only their eyes above the surface, waiting for anything edible to wander close to the shore. The fell taints are always careful to fly at least 5 feet above the stream and out of the nymphs' reach. As in the first encounter, the fell taints are not expecting intruders but are fairly alert. Characters attempting to sneak into this cavern must overcome the fell taints' passive Perception of 18. The nymphs are nearly as alert as the fell taints and have a passive Perception of 17. However, the chuul nymphs are nearly invisible to characters as they hide beneath the surface of the water (passive Stealth check of 19).

Two corpses float beneath the surface in the center of the stream. They are anchored to a large stone by a glue-like secretion produced by the chuul nymphs. Both corpses are elven men, and one of the corpses is Tarthias Ironleaf from the Missing Merchants hook.

When the PCs enter this cavern, read: *After navigating the dim tunnels, the shocking brilliance of this large cavern is almost painful to your eyes. More clusters of the strange glowing crystals provide glaring illumination. A murky stream runs sluggishly through the center of this cave, disappearing beneath the rubble-scattered floor in the southwestern corner. However, a trio of the strange, tentacular beasts that seem to plague these caverns lurks across the stream, and they turn to attack you.*

Perception DC 15

The still waters of the subterranean stream seem darker in one area. On closer examination, you realize that a pair of corpses bobs in the sluggish current just below the surface.

2 Chuul Nymphs (N)		Level 2 Lurker
Medium aberrant magical beast (aquatic)		XP 125 each
Initiative +8	Senses Perception +7; darkvision	
HP 33; Bloodied 16		
AC 16; Fortitude 15, Reflex 15, Will 13		
Speed 6, swim 6		
⬇ Claw (standard; at-will)		
+7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.		
⬇ Double Attack (standard; at-will)		
Requires combat advantage; the chuul nymph makes two claw attacks against a single target. If both attacks hit, the target is grabbed (until escape).		
⬇ Crushing Claws (standard; at-will)		
Grabbed target only; +5 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 3 damage.		
Powerful Grappler (no action; at-will)		
When a chuul nymph moves a grabbed target of Medium size or smaller, it gains a +5 bonus to the Strength attack.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Skills Stealth +9		
Str 16 (+4)	Dex 17 (+4)	Wis 13 (+2)
Con 15 (+3)	Int 4 (-2)	Cha 11 (+1)

2 Fell Taint Pulsars (P)		Level 1 Artillery
Small aberrant magical beast		XP 100 each
Initiative +2	Senses Perception +8	
HP 18; Bloodied 9		
AC 12; Fortitude 11, Reflex 12, Will 14		
Resist insubstantial; Vulnerable 5 psychic		
Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)		
⬇ Tendril Caress (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
+4 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + 3 psychic damage.		
⌚ Tendril Pulse (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
Ranged 20; +6 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 3 psychic damage.		
⌚ Tendril Flurry (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Psychic		
Ranged 10; targets one, two, or three creatures; +4 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 1 psychic damage.		
Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ♦ Healing		
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint pulsar loses insubstantial and its fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the pulsar kills the target, it regains all of its hit points.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –
Skills Stealth +7		
Str 11 (+0)	Dex 14 (+2)	Wis 16 (+3)
Con 13 (+1)	Int 4 (-3)	Cha 10 (+0)

TACTICS

The fell taints move close to the cavern ceiling and open up with ranged attacks as soon as they spot the PCs. The fell taint pulsars begin the combat with *tendrils flurry* and then switch to *tendrils pulse* until *tendrils flurry* recharges. The fell taint thought eater begins combat with *thought fog* and then switches to *spirit haze*. The goal of the fell taints is to keep the PCs on the other side of the stream, or better yet, draw them close to the stream and the lurking chuul nymphs.

The chuul nymphs are familiar with the fell taints' tactics and move adjacent to the shore when combat begins, attempting to stay hidden (make a Stealth check for the nymphs opposed by the characters' highest passive Perception). Once they are in position, and if they haven't been spotted, the nymphs ready

a *double attack* that triggers as soon as any character moves adjacent to shore. If this tactic works, and one or both of the nymphs manage to grab hold of a hero, the nymphs use their next standard action to haul a grabbed adventurer into the middle of the stream and beneath the surface of the water (refer to the rules on aquatic combat on page 45 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Once a chuul has a PC in the water, it relies on a combination of drowning and *crushing claws* to dispatch its prey. The chuul nymphs do not leave the safety of the water for any reason. If they are spotted and the PCs resort to ranged attacks from the shore, the nymphs submerge completely, gaining total concealment from the murky water. If one of the chuul nymphs is killed and the other is bloodied, the remaining nymph swims further downstream into a subterranean tunnel and out of the characters' reach.

The fell taints resort to melee combat only if the characters make it across the stream. If forced into melee, the fell taints try to stay adjacent to a cluster of warp crystals to gain a bonus to their attack rolls. The fell taints fight to the death to protect their lair.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The three clusters of warp crystals here provide bright illumination.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 15 feet high.

Corpses: Two elven corpses float in the stream. One of these corpses is Tarthias Ironleaf. A character that moves into a square with a corpse gains cover and a +2 bonus to Athletics checks made to stay afloat and tread water.

Pools: The two pools on the northwest side of the stream are 3 feet deep and are considered difficult terrain.

Fell Taint Thought Eater (T) Level 2 Controller

Small aberrant magical beast

XP 125

Initiative +2 **Senses** Perception +6

HP 26; **Bloodied** 13

AC 14; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 13, **Will** 15

Resist insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 5 psychic

Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)

⬇ **Tendrill Caress** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Psychic**

+6 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 5 psychic damage.

✈ **Spirit Haze** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Psychic**

Ranged 10; +6 vs. Will; 1d4 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the fell taint thought eater's next turn.

⬅ **Thought Fog** (standard; recharge ⏳) ♦ **Psychic, Charm**

Close blast 5; targets enemies; +5 vs. Will; the target is slowed (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is immobilized instead of slowed (save ends).

Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ♦ **Healing**

Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint thought eater loses insubstantial and its fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the thought eater kills the target, it regains all of its hit points.

Alignment Unaligned

Languages –

Str 11 (+1)

Dex 12 (+2)

Wis 10 (+1)

Con 13 (+2)

Int 5 (-2)

Cha 16 (+4)

Rubble: Squares with rubble are considered difficult terrain.

Stream: This murky underground stream is slow moving (DC 10 Athletics check to swim) but it is 7 feet deep, requiring characters to swim across it.

Warp Crystals: The three clusters of warp crystals in this area provide bright illumination out to 10 squares, more than enough to light the entire cavern. Creatures can move through a square with a cluster of warp crystals, but the square counts as difficult terrain. Warp crystal radiate the dire, chaotic energies of the Far Realm and can have deleterious effects on PCs that get too close to them. Any creature without the aberrant origin that starts its turn adjacent to a cluster of warp crystals takes a -1 penalty to attack

rolls until the start of its next turn. Conversely, a creature with the aberrant origin that starts its turn adjacent to a cluster of warp crystals gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls until the start of its next turn.

Treasure: One of the corpses in the stream is Tarthias Ironleaf from the Missing Merchants hook. He wears a platinum signet ring on his right hand that bears the sigil of his house, an oak leaf behind crossed swords. The signet ring is worth 75 gp, should the PCs decide to keep it rather than return it to Ardia Ironleaf.



T5. CAVERN OF THE SHARD

Encounter Level 3 (XP 775)

- 3 fell taint lashers (L)
- 1 fell taint warp wender (W)
- 1 shard golem (G)

SETUP

This large cavern is where the Chaos Shard came to rest after falling away from the great meteor and carving the descending tunnels of the tainted spiral. In the years since, its influence has caused increased seismic activity in the area, which has modified the cavern to its current uneven state. The cavern now consists of three staggered ledges, each roughly 10 feet above the other, separating it into three areas. The ledges present no difficulty to the fell taints, but for creatures that cannot fly, the ledges are a serious challenge.

The fell taints have been bringing roughly half their victims into this chamber, dumping the corpses into the center ledge as an offering to their “god.” The Chaos Shard is hardly aware of the fell taint’s gifts, but this hasn’t stopped the foul aberrations from bringing it new victims on a regular basis.

Although it is not actually sentient, the Chaos Shard possesses a crude survival instinct. To gain both mobility and protection, the Chaos Shard long ago constructed an armored, golem-like shell composed of warp crystals. The warp crystal shell is completely mobile and allows the Chaos Shard to channel the destructive energy of the Far Realm.

Unlike the other caverns, the fell taints here are on guard, fervently protecting their god from intruders. In addition, the entrance to this cavern is devoid of all

cover. These two factors make it unlikely that the PCs will be able to surprise the fell taints by sneaking into the cavern unseen.

When the PCs enter this room, read:

You emerge into the glaring illumination of a crystal-lit cavern. The cavern is long, narrow, and separated into three distinct sections by high ledges. Each ledge is roughly 10 feet high, so that the third and final section of the cavern is 20 feet from the ground. On the first ledge, a truly gruesome sight awaits you: a dozen corpses piled in rotting heaps. Hovering above the corpses are three more of the writhing, tentacular horrors that you have battled every step of the way in these cursed caverns. Beyond that, on the second ledge, another tentacled abomination hovers beside a large, blocky humanoid composed entirely of glowing blue crystal.

TACTICS

If the PCs cannot mount an effective ranged assault, the fell taint lashers wait for them to begin climbing to the first ledge, and then attack, gaining combat advantage against climbing PCs. When a PC finally gains the first ledge, the fell taint warp wender uses *psychic transposition* to swap places with the hero, placing the unfortunate PC alone with the shard golem. The shard golem focuses its attacks on the isolated PC, using *mind searing strike* every round until the PC is slain or escapes.

If the PCs all gain the first ledge, or if they have strong ranged attacks, the remaining fell taints fall back to the second ledge and use the tactics detailed above. If the PCs manage to gain the second ledge, the shard golem hits them with *chaos pulse*, and the remaining fell taints tear into dazed PCs with melee attacks. Bloodied fell taints take every opportunity

to use *fell taint feeding* on helpless PCs during this combat, trying to stay in the fight as long as possible to protect their god. The shard golem tries to keep as many PCs in its *unnatural aura* as possible, and uses *chaos pulse* as soon as it recharges. It uses *mind-searing strike* on a potent melee-oriented PC each round and saves its action point to put down a bloodied PC with an additional *slam* or *mind-searing strike*.

Once the PCs reach the second tier, the fell taints and shard golem are cornered and fight ferociously and to the death to repel the invading heroes.

Shard Golem (G)	Level 3 Elite Soldier (Leader)
Medium aberrant animate (construct)	XP 300
Initiative +3	Senses Perception +8; darkvision
Unnatural Aura aura 1; non-aberrant creatures within the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.	
HP 98; Bloodied 49	
AC 18; Fortitude 16; Reflex 14; Will 17	
Immune disease, poison, sleep; Vulnerable 5 thunder	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6	
Action Points 1	
⬇ Slam (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 psychic damage.	
⬇ Mind-Searing Strike (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 psychic damage, and one of the following effects (roll a d4):	
1. Ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).	
2. Target gains vulnerable 5 psychic (save ends).	
3. The target slides 2 squares and makes a melee basic attack against an adjacent ally.	
4. Target is dazed until the start of the shard golem’s next turn.	
⬇ Dual Mind Sear (standard; recharge ☐☐☐) ♦ Psychic	
The shard golem makes two mind-searing strikes, each against a different target.	
⬇ Chaos Pulse (minor; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ Psychic	
Close burst 3; targets enemies; +6 vs. Will; 5 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).	
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages –
Skills Arcana +8, Dungeoneering +8, Endurance +9	
Str 18 (+5)	Dex 11 (+1) Wis 15 (+3)
Con 17 (+4)	Int 4 (-2) Cha 16 (+4)

3 Fell Taint Lashers (L)	Level 1 Soldier
Small aberrant magical beast	XP 100
Initiative +3 Senses Perception +8	
HP 20; Bloodied 10	
AC 15; Fortitude 12, Reflex 12, Will 14	
Resist insubstantial; Vulnerable 5 psychic	
Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)	
⬇ Tendrils Caress (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
+5 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 psychic damage.	
⬇ Tendrils of Stasis (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
+5 vs. Will; 1d4 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the fell taint lasher's next turn.	
Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ♦ Healing	
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint lasher loses insubstantial and its fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the lasher kills the target, it regains all of its hit points.	
Flowing Tendrils (free, when the fell taint lasher makes an opportunity attack; at-will)	
The lasher shifts 1 square.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages –	
Str 11 (+0) Dex 12 (+1) Wis 16 (+3)	
Con 13 (+1) Int 4 (–3) Cha 10 (+0)	

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The three clusters of warp crystals here provide bright illumination.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 20 feet high.

Corpses: Squares with corpses in them are considered difficult terrain. A total of 12 corpses lie here, in various states of decay and dismemberment, including eight human corpses, three elven corpses, and a single dwarven corpse.

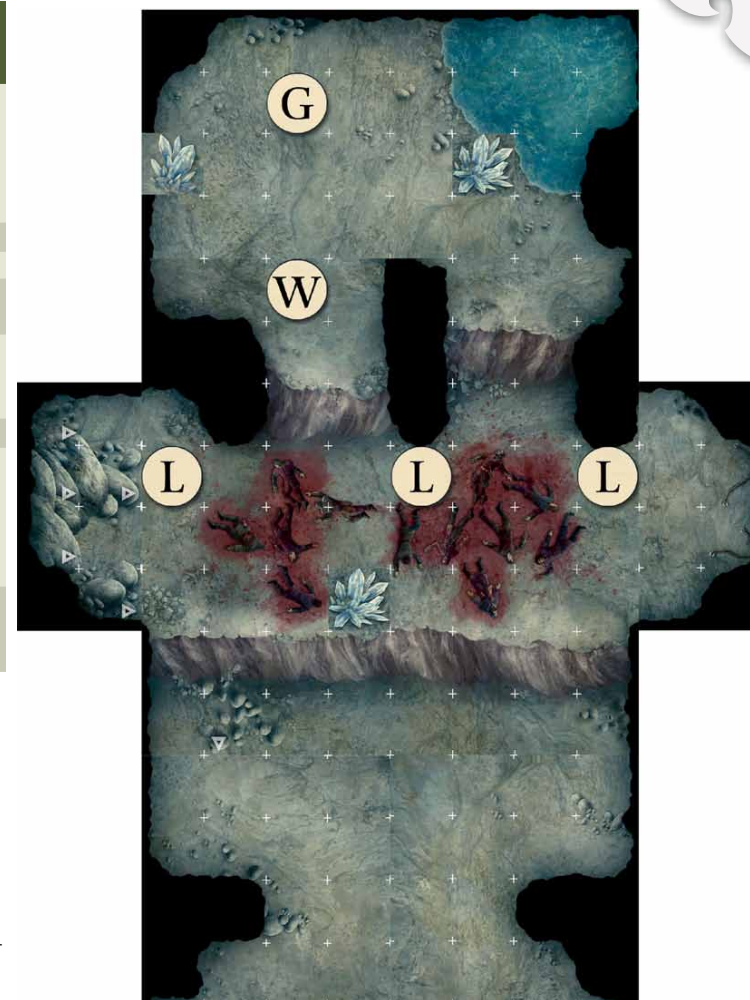
Ledges: The three areas in this cavern are separated by two tiered ledges, each 10 feet above the last. Climbing onto a ledge requires a DC 10 Athletics check.

Pool: The pool on the highest shelf is 3 feet deep and is considered difficult terrain.

Fell Taint	Level 4 Controller
Warp Wender (W)	
Medium aberrant magical beast	XP 175
Initiative +5 Senses Perception +10	
HP 38; Bloodied 19	
AC 18; Fortitude 15, Reflex 15, Will 17	
Resist insubstantial; Vulnerable 5 psychic	
Speed 1, fly 6 (hover)	
⬇ Tendrils Caress (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
+8 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 psychic damage.	
⚡ Psychic Transposition (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Teleportation	
Ranged 10; +8 vs. Will; 1d4 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). <i>First Failed Saving Throw:</i> The fell taint warp wender swaps positions with the target.	
Fell Taint Feeding (standard; at-will) ♦ Healing	
Targets a helpless or unconscious creature; the fell taint warp wender loses insubstantial and its fly speed until the end of its next turn, and it makes a coup de grace against the target. If the warp wender kills the target, it regains all of its hit points.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages –	
Str 11 (+2) Dex 16 (+5) Wis 17 (+5)	
Con 15 (+4) Int 6 (+0) Cha 12 (+3)	

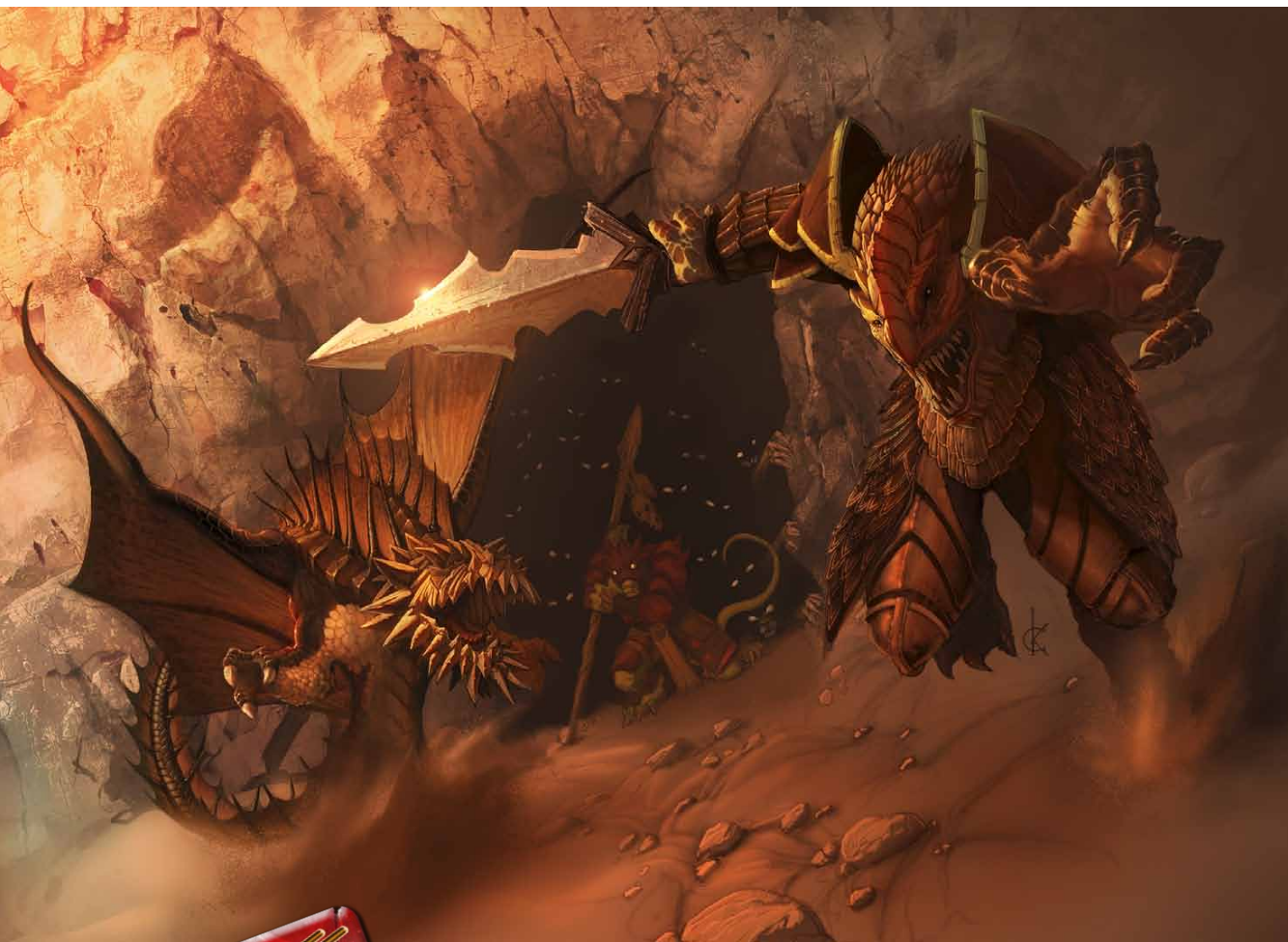
Rubble: Squares with rubble are considered difficult terrain.

Warp Crystals: The three clusters of warp crystals in this area provide bright illumination out to 10 squares, more than enough to light the entire cavern. Creatures can move through a square with a cluster of warp crystals, but the square counts as difficult terrain. Warp crystal radiate the dire, chaotic energies of the Far Realm and can have deleterious effects on PCs that get too close to them. Any creature without the aberrant origin that starts its turn adjacent to a cluster of warp crystals takes a –1 penalty to attack rolls until the start of its next turn. Conversely, a creature with the aberrant origin that starts its turn adjacent to a cluster of warp crystals gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls until the start of its next turn.



About the Author

Aeryn “Blackdirge” Rudel is a staff writer and editor for Goodman Games, a freelance writer and RPG designer, and the editor-in-chief of the 4E magazine *Level Up*. He has been a professional game designer since 2005, and his recent author credits include Blackdirge’s *Dungeon Denizens*, *Critter Cache: Daemons*, and *Hero’s Handbook: Tiefling*. Aeryn currently lives in Modesto, California with his wife Melissa, a non-gamer whose tolerance for her husband’s geekery borders on the supernatural.



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A Chaos Scar Adventure



THE LOST LIBRARY

“The Lost Library” is a short adventure for five 2nd-level characters that takes place in a remote cave near the mouth of the Chaos Scar. Through the course of the adventure, the PCs encounter a tribe of kobolds that has recently unearthed an ancient arcane library that predates the valley. The PCs have the opportunity to explore the library, uncovering a portal to a sorcerer’s abandoned inner sanctum.

For details on the Chaos Scar and its environs, read the Chaos Scar introduction and check out the map of the entire valley.

If you're not playing a Chaos Scar campaign, you can still use this adventure by integrating it into any existing campaign situated near a wilderness area that features the remains of an ancient, lost library.

BACKGROUND

Before the violent birth of the Chaos Scar, the goliath sorcerer Voran Earthmane mastered elemental magic in his isolated keep. (More information on Voran Earthmane can be found in the adventure, "Stick in the Mud.") For his most dangerous experiments, he built isolated underground chambers that could be accessed only through magical methods. He was able to experiment for several years in peace, but when the meteor struck, he lost all access to his work. After recovering what he could, Voran left, and knowledge of his work faded.

Hesskin Flamebrow, a dragonborn treasure hunter drawn to the power that lies in the valley, arrived at the Chaos Scar a few weeks ago. He and his associate met a small group of kobolds that have been abandoned by their tribe, Clan Fireclaw. In such a weakened state, these kobolds were forced to pledge their allegiance to the dragonborn. As part of the bargain to save their lives, the kobold leader Nibbik claimed he knew a powerful ritual that could detect piles of gold. While this was a lie, he did know of a dragon that recently moved into the area, and it was Nibbik's hope that by leading Hesskin to the dragon's cave, Nibbik could defeat two potential enemies at once.

Unfortunately for the kobolds, the dragon Kethendtir and the dragonborn Hesskin formed an alliance. Nibbik was forced to continue his treasure detecting ruse, and he and his tribe were forced to excavate further into Kethendtir's cave. Much to the wyrm priest's surprise, his miners uncovered one of Voran's lost chambers. In the few hours before the PCs arrive, Hesskin has discovered the secret of a floating lantern and opened an arcane portal that leads to Voran's inner sanctum.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The adventurers make their way to the lair of the brown dragon wyrmling Kethendtir. There, they must face the dragon almost as soon as they arrive, along with a number of kobold miners serving of the dragon. Afterward, the characters can make their way deeper into the complex, eventually finding the site of the kobolds' excavation. They must face Gravash and Hesskin, the two dragonborn who initially forced these kobold outcasts into service, along with some hostile defenses Voran left to ward his library. The characters have an opportunity to negotiate with the kobolds through Nibbik, their wyrm priest, and make an alliance with the kobolds to provide them with intelligence on future explorations of the Chaos Scar.

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

Here are a few story hooks to draw the PCs into exploring Kethendtir's cavern and the recently uncovered library.

HOOK 1: STOLEN GEAR

Thorgrim Spinehammer is a dwarf in charge of a small mine close to the Chaos Scar. He recently suffered the theft of his mining equipment and tracked the thieves as far as the King's Wall. Not willing to risk his own life by entering the valley, he offers to pay the characters 75 gp to follow the kobolds to the cave and recover twelve stolen picks. Thorgrim will pay as much as 125 gp to avoid purchasing replacement gear, but a DC 15 Diplomacy check must be made to convince the miserly dwarf to part with his money.

Quest XP: 500 XP for bringing back Thorgrim's stolen equipment.

HOOK 2: WYRMLING RAIDER

Local farmers have been losing livestock to raids performed by a brown wyrmling dragon (Kethendtir). The farmers know that this problem will only get worse in the future, so they have banded together to solve their problem. A quiet halfling farmer named Karrie Buttonquail approaches the characters with all the money the farmers could amass: 2,618 cp. If the PCs try to bargain, she'll reluctantly throw in her prize sheep worth 100 sp.

Quest XP: 500 XP for bringing back proof of Kethendtir's death.

HOOK 3: SAGE'S DEATH

Last night, Hesskin broke into a sage's study and stole several tomes dealing with the history of the valley before the crash of the meteor. The eladrin sage Emeranith was slain during the robbery. Witnesses saw Emeranith teleport into the street to escape, but he was struck in the back by a red feathered bolt fired from Hesskin's crossbow before the eladrin could flee. The village's mayor, Quinn Nanith, offers a 200 gp bounty to hunt down Hesskin and bring justice to the murderer and recovering the stolen goods for Emeranith's widow, Mirianna.

Quest XP: 100 XP for capturing or slaying Hesskin, 100 XP for the recovery of the tomes, or 500 XP for both.

TREASURE PREPARATION

"The Lost Library" uses the treasure parcel system described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*®. The characters should gain a total of three treasure parcels in this adventure. Listed below are the most likely places to find parcels and what those treasure parcels might consist of. The magic items should come from the players' wish lists.

Parcel	Item
Parcel 1:	
The Wyrmling's Cave	One level 5 magic item
Parcel 2: The Lost Library	Two vials of alchemist's acid (Level 1, 20 gp each) and 50 gp of Alchemical Reagents
Parcel 3:	
The Inner Sanctum	220 gp and 400 sp

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

This adventure features a pair of new magic items, which are presented here. Both are simple variants of existing items from *Adventurer's Vault*.

Voran's Eternal Chalk Level 1

Vandals, scholars, and explorers alike appreciate the magical longevity of this short stick of chalk.

Wondrous Item 360 gp

Property: A stick of *eternal chalk* never breaks or wears down with normal use. Any writing or drawing made with this chalk cannot be erased for one week by anyone except the original artist or author.

Voran's eternal chalk is red.

Special: If the *eternal chalk* is used to drawn anything inside the magic circle in the inner sanctum, a portal opens to Voran's Study in his ruined keep. The portal lasts until the wielder takes an extended rest.

Voran's Floating Lantern Level 3

This silver lantern floats in midair under your control.

Wondrous Item 680 gp

Property: This lantern never needs lighting or refilling. When you let go of the lantern, it continues to hang in the air where you leave it. If weight in excess of 1 pound is applied to the lantern, it falls to the ground.

Power (At-Will): Minor Action. While you hold the floating lantern or are adjacent to it, you can set its light to be bright (10-square radius), dim (5-square radius), or off.

Power (At-Will): Move Action. The last creature to hold the lantern can mentally command it to move up to 10 squares in any direction, but not more than 10 squares from it.

Special: If *Voran's floating lantern* illuminates the magic circle in either the library or the inner sanctum, a portal appears allowing travel between the two rooms. The portal lasts until the lantern no longer illuminates either portal. The lantern can travel through the portal with no ill effect.

GETTING STARTED

Once the characters get to the cavern, read or paraphrase the following description of the wyrmling's cave entry:

Small reptilian tracks disturb the fine sand that spills out of the secluded cave before you. A nearby pile of sharp, jagged rocks has been haphazardly piled outside of the cave.

When the characters enter the cave, read:

The grass grows sparse as you approach the cave, revealing a sand-covered stone floor. A well-trodden trail leads into the darkness. The sound of metal on rock reverberates throughout the cavern.

Characters examining the tracks outside of the cavern can make a Perception Check:

DC 15 Perception: The characters find multiple kobold tracks, a couple of larger reptilian prints as wide as a dragonborn's foot, and small tracks that appear to belong to either a drake or dragon.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the characters decide to spare Nibbik, you have the option of introducing kobolds as companion characters to the party. (For more information on companion characters, see page 27 of *Dungeon Master Guide 2*.) Three potential kobolds can join the group, depending on what the party needs.

Nibbik, Kobold Wyrmpriest (Controller)

Minnock, Kobold Slinger (Striker)

Krunk One-Ear, Kobold Dragonshield (Defender)

These kobolds are all members of the Fireclaw tribe.

Nibbik is an opportunist—he sees potential in the characters. His loyalty is not absolute, and if the PCs ever face an opponent that seems able to defeat them, Nibbik will switch sides to save his own hide. He also seeks the power that a shard of the meteor would grant him—should he find one, he will attempt to seize it without a second thought.

The PCs might choose to use Voran's sanctum as a base of operations in the valley. No map is provided for the space below the Portal chamber, but the space should have the basic necessities for resting. If the players start using this area as a base of operations, they might be interested in outfitting the base with wondrous lair items as described on page 79 of *Adventurer's Vault 2*.



L1: THE WYRMLING'S CAVE

Encounter Level 2 (725 XP)

This encounter establishes the kobold tribe, Kethendtir's home, and the entry to the cavern.

SETUP

2 kobold dragonshields (D)

5 kobold miners (M)

1 kobold slinger (S)

Kethendtir, brown dragon wyrmling (K)

Collapsing rock pile (T)

Kethendtir doesn't enter the battle until the start of the third round of combat.

Two kobold dragonshields stand watch at the mouth of the first chamber. Any character that moves into the cavern must succeed at a DC 12 Stealth check (to beat the kobolds' passive Perception) or alert the kobolds. If the characters that enter the cave succeed, the kobolds are surprised.

If a hero succeeds at a DC 21 Perception check within 3 squares of where the wyrmling has burrowed into the sand, read the following:

The ground at the cave mouth is disturbed, as if something has recently been buried below the sand.

When Kethendtir enters the combat, roll initiative, place him at the cavern entry where indicated on the map, and read or paraphrase the following:

2 Kobold Dragonshields (D)	Level 2 Soldier
Small natural humanoid (reptile)	XP 125
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +2; darkvision
HP 36; Bloodied 18	
AC 18; Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 13; see also <i>trap sense</i>	
Resist 5 fire	
Speed 5	
⚔ Short Sword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the kobold dragonshield's next turn.	
Dragonshield Tactics (immediate reaction, when an adjacent enemy shifts away or an enemy moves adjacent; at-will)	
The kobold dragonshield shifts 1 square.	
Mob Attack	
The kobold dragonshield gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls per kobold ally adjacent to the target.	
Shifty (minor; at-will)	
The kobold shifts 1 square.	
Trap Sense	
The kobold gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against traps.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Draconic
Skills Acrobatics +5, Stealth +7, Thievery +7	
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 13 (+2) Wis 12 (+2)
Con 12 (+2)	Int 9 (+0) Cha 10 (+1)
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, short sword	

Sand scatters as a brown dragon the size of a small dog launches itself out of the ground. Bellowing, the dragon says, "A swift death comes to those that interfere with the creation of my home."

Collapsing Rock Pile	Single-Use Terrain
A precariously stacked pile of rocks is ready to fall with a single strong push.	
Standard Action	
Requirement: You must be adjacent to the rock pile.	
Check: Athletics check (DC 15) to collapse the rock pile.	
Success: The pile of rocks falls, crushing nearby creatures.	
Target: Each creature in a close blast 3 next to the rock pile.	
Attack: +5 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 2d8 + 1 damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
Effect: The area where the rocks fall becomes difficult terrain.	

5 Kobold Miners (M)	Level 1 Minion Skirmisher
Small natural humanoid (reptile)	XP 25
Initiative +4	Senses Perception +1; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 15; Fortitude 11, Reflex 13, Will 11; see also <i>trap sense</i>	
Speed 6	
⚔ Pick (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+6 vs. AC; 4 damage (crit 6).	
🪨 Small Rock (standard; at-will)	
Ranged 5; +6 vs. AC; 3 damage.	
Shifty (minor; at-will)	
The kobold shifts 1 square as a minor action.	
Trap Sense	
The kobold gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against traps.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Draconic
Str 8 (-1)	Dex 14 (+2) Wis 12 (+1)
Con 12 (+1)	Int 9 (-1) Cha 10 (+0)
Equipment leather armor, war pick, backpack	

TACTICS

The kobold dragonshields hold their ground while the kobold slinger fires at the PCs from a distance. Any PC with a passive Insight 12 or greater can tell that the dragonshields are surprisingly brave—they know that the wyrmling will soon come to their rescue.

The miners avoid combat, but if a target move near the rock pile trap, a miner attempts to push the rock pile on to the PCs. With an Athletics check of -1, it is likely the miner will fail the attempt—describe what the kobold is doing to give the characters the chance to do the same thing in return.

If the battle turns sour, some of the kobold miners flee by either moving deeper into the cavern or by leaping into the hole in the floor. If a character moves next to a fleeing miner, the miner shifts away as a minor action on its turn and flees. If any kobolds escape through the tunnel (which is likely), the PCs cannot gain surprise in any encounter for the rest of the adventure unless they take an extended rest.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Hesskin has commanded the kobolds to illuminate the entire cavern because he has no natural ability to see in the dark. Several torches are crudely bolted to the walls throughout the chamber, providing bright light.

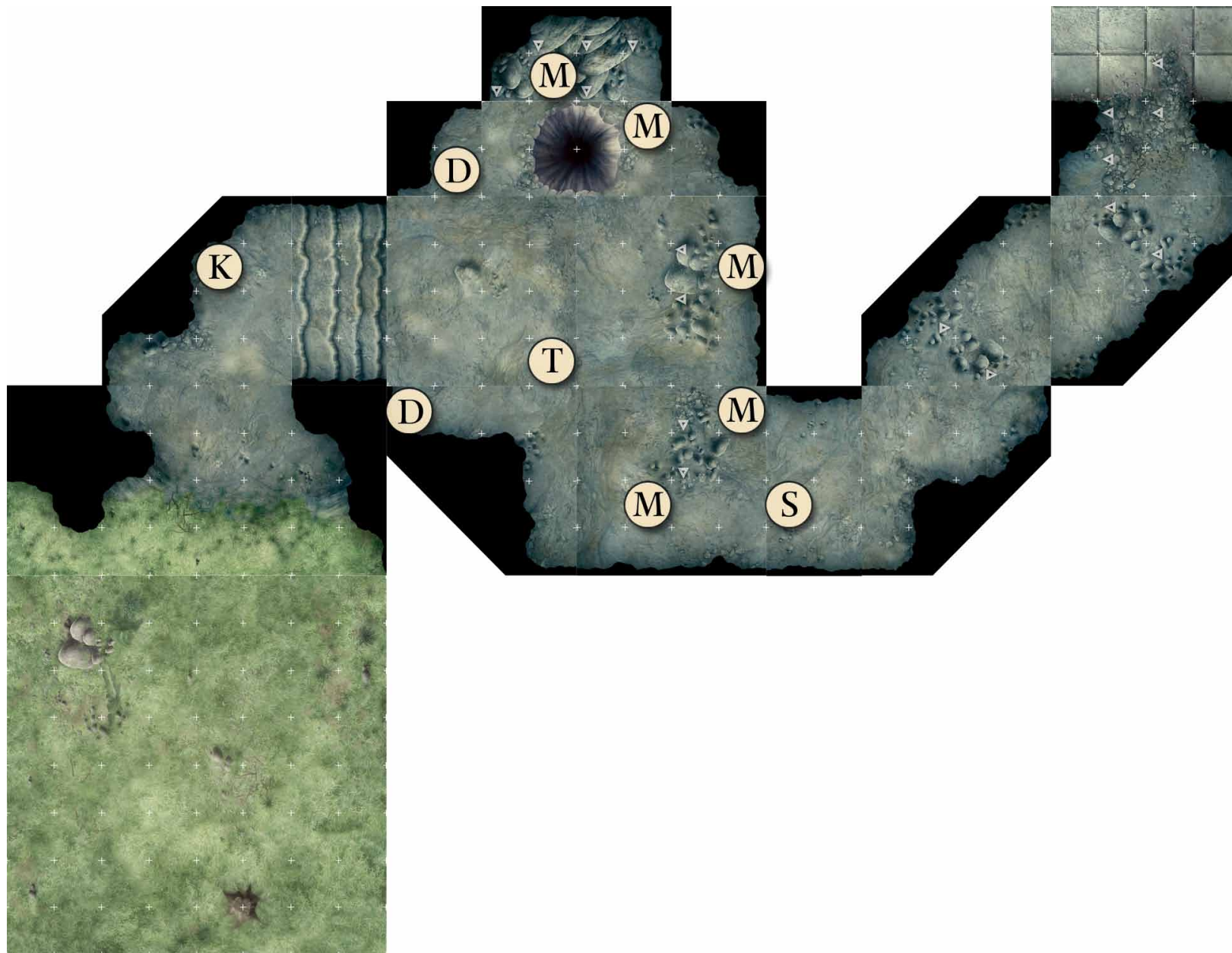
Rock Piles: The kobold's mining operations has resulted in many rock piles throughout the cavern. These piles of stone are difficult terrain. One rock pile is precariously stacked and might fall with some encouragement. The location of this single-use terrain is marked on the map (T).

Sinkhole: In the middle of the room is a sinkhole that leads to a network of tunnels below the ground. Small creatures can squeeze through the tunnels, and creatures that are Tiny or smaller have no movement penalties. A multitude of tunnels grant fleeing kobolds many opportunities to hide, but an energetic halfling or gnome could attempt to track the miners down. For each kobold that escaped down the hole that an adventurer chases, have that character attempt a DC 10 Dungeoneering check to determine if they can catch up to a miner. Success indicates the character finds a kobold and combat ensues; if the character fails, he or she manages to find a kobold as well, but loses a healing surge during the hunt. Each attempt takes 10 minutes.

Kobold Slinger (S)		Level 1 Artillery
Small natural humanoid (reptile)		XP 100
Initiative +3	Senses Perception +1; darkvision	
HP 24; Bloodied 12		
AC 13; Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 12; see also <i>trap sense</i>		
Speed 6		
⚔ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+5 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.		
🏹 Sling (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Ranged 10/20; +6 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage; see also <i>special shot</i> .		
Special Shot		
The kobold slinger can fire special ammunition from its sling. It typically carries 3 rounds of special shot, chosen from the types listed below. A special shot attack that hits deals normal damage and has an additional effect depending on its type:		
Stinkpot: The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).		
Firepot (Fire): The target takes ongoing 2 fire damage (save ends).		
Gluepot: The target is immobilized (save ends).		
Shifty (minor; at-will)		
The kobold shifts 1 square.		
Trap Sense		
The kobold gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against traps.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Draconic	
Str 9 (-1)	Dex 17 (+3)	Wis 12 (+1)
Con 12 (+1)	Int 9 (-1)	Cha 10 (+0)
Equipment leather armor, dagger, sling		

Kethendtir has the arrogance of youth, and at the beginning of the combat he believes he is assured of victory. When he leaps out of the ground, the wyrmling engulf the party with his breath weapon and follows up with a *sand cloud* attack. If none of the characters are blinded, he tries to use his kobold allies and flanking partners as he resorts to melee attacks. Once his hit points have been reduced to 15 or below, he burrows through the sand and flees into the cave, attempting to get help from his dragonborn allies.

Kethendtir, Brown Dragon Wyrmling (K)		Level 2 Elite Lurker
Medium natural magical beast (dragon)		XP 250
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +3; darkvision, tremorsense 10	
HP 64; Bloodied 32		
AC 19; Fortitude 19, Reflex 16, Will 16		
Resist 5 fire		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed 7, burrow 6, fly 4 (hover)		
Action Points 1		
⚔ Bite (standard, at-will)		
+7 vs. AC; 1d8+4 damage.		
⚔ Claw (standard, at-will)		
+7 vs. AC; 1d6+4 damage.		
⚔ Double Attack (standard, at-will)		
The dragon makes two claw attacks.		
🏹 Sand Spray (immediate reaction, when an enemy targets the dragon with a ranged attack, at-will)		
The wyrmling attacks the triggering enemy; ranged 10; +6 vs. Reflex; 1d6+1 damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the dragon's next turn.		
🔥 Breath Weapon (standard; recharges when first bloodied, encounter)		
Close blast 4; +6 vs. Fortitude; 2d8+2 damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).		
Sand Cloud (move, recharge ☹️) ♦ Polymorph		
The wyrmling transforms into a cloud of sand and shifts a number of squares up to its speed. It can move through occupied squares but must end in a legal space. Any creature whose space the dragon enters takes 1d6 + 4 damage and is blinded (save ends). The wyrmling returns to its normal form after this move.		
Combat Advantage		
The wyrmling deals 1d6 extra damage against any target it has combat advantage against.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Draconic	
Skills Endurance +8, Stealth +7		
Str 19 (+5)	Dex 12 (+2)	Wis 14 (+3)
Con 14 (+3)	Int 12 (+2)	Cha 10 (+1)



L2: THE LOST LIBRARY

Encounter Level 2 (725 XP)

SETUP

Gravash, dragonborn swiftblade (G)

1 kobold dragonshield (D)

2 kobold miners (M)

2 kobold slingers (S)

Warded desk trap

The PCs continue down a recently excavated passage and discover a well-crafted room carved out of the bedrock. Piles of rock lie by the entry to the cavern where the kobolds broke into the chamber.

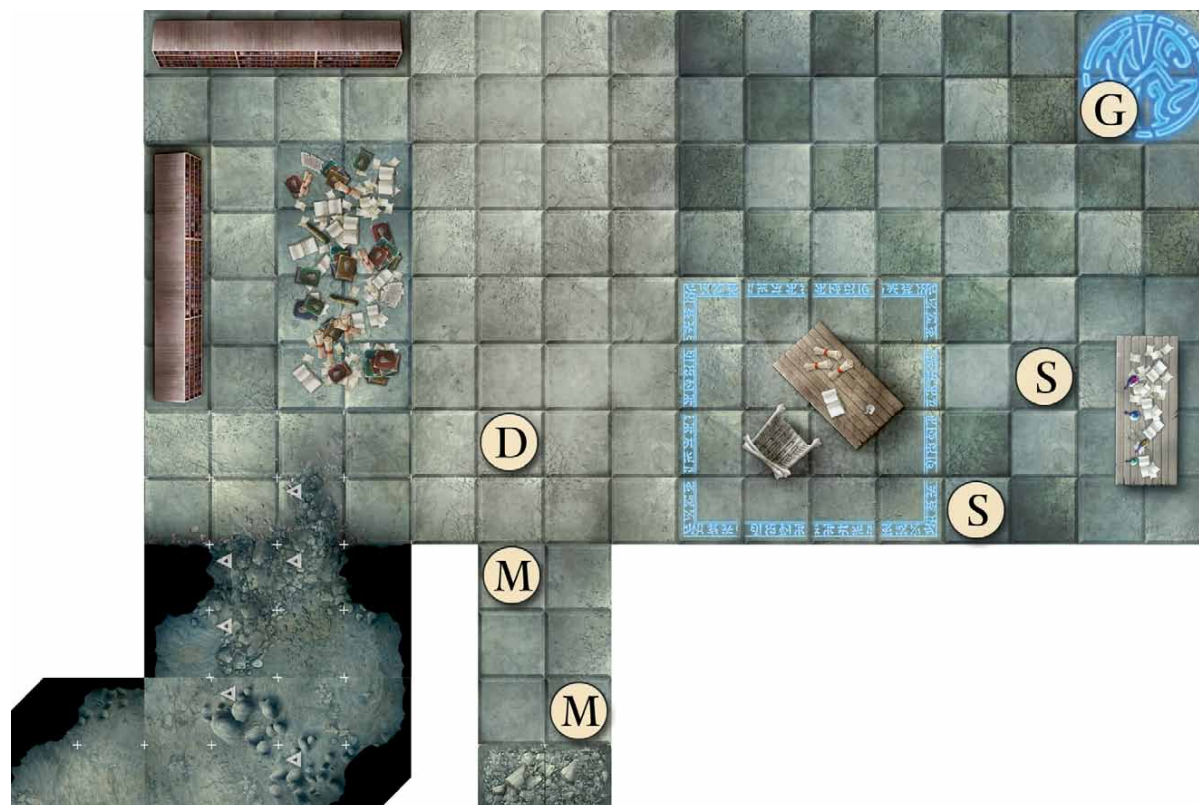
When the PCs enter the room, read:

As you turn the corner, the natural walls of the passage abruptly transition into well-crafted stonework. A rock wall that sealed off the tunnel has been pushed down and now lies scattered on the floor, allowing access to a chamber illuminated by a soft blue glow.

Two ransacked bookshelves lean against the walls of the room. The contents of the shelves have been thrown into a moldering pile on the floor.

An antique desk sits near the middle of the room, surrounded by glowing dwarven runes carved into the floor. Behind the desk is a wooden table covered in alchemical equipment. In the far corner of the room, a humming arcane portal hovers a few inches above a glowing circle carved into the floor.

As a small clutch of kobolds turn to face you, a dragonborn clad in leather armor unsheathes a longsword and nimbly advances, snarling.



TACTICS

Gravash is overconfident and does not see the PCs as a threat. He takes tactically poor decisions to show off his training: He won't concentrate on one foe, but instead leap over one foe with *end-over-end strike*, and then follow up with a *longsword* attack against a different target.

The kobold dragonshield reluctantly joins Gravash in combat, moving into a flanking position when possible. The kobold slingers attack the PCs from behind the warded desk, using it to gain cover against the characters. The miners cower in the hallway, only emerging if they can strike at an opponent without provoking an opportunity attack. Gravash and the kobolds all know about the trapped desk and won't willingly trigger it.

Gravash, Level 2 Elite Skirmisher	
Dragonborn Swiftblade (G)	
Medium natural humanoid	XP 250
Initiative +7 Senses Perception +2	
HP 74; Bloodied 37	
AC 16; Fortitude 13, Reflex 16, Will 13	
Resist 5 fire	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6	
Action Points 1	
⬇ Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+7 vs. AC (+8 while bloodied); 1d8 + 4 damage	
⬇ End-Over-End Strike (move; at-will)	
Gravash makes a longsword attack and then shifts up to 3 squares to a square adjacent to the target. Gravash can shift through the target's square during this movement.	
⬅ Dragon Breath (minor; encounter) ♦ Fire	
Close blast 3; +5 vs. Reflex (+6 while bloodied); 1d8 + 4 fire damage	
Roll with the Blow (immediate reaction; at-will)	
<i>Trigger:</i> Gravash is hit by a melee or ranged attack. <i>Effect:</i> Gravash shifts 1 square.	
Tumble (move; encounter)	
Gravash shifts 6 squares.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Draconic
Str 13 (+2)	Dex 19 (+5) Wis 13 (+2)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 7 (-1) Cha 10 (+1)
Equipment leather armor, longsword	

Kobold Dragonshield (D) Level 2 Soldier	
Small natural humanoid (reptile)	XP 125
Initiative +4 Senses Perception +2; darkvision	
HP 36; Bloodied 18	
AC 18; Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 13; see also <i>trap sense</i>	
Resist 5 fire	
Speed 5	
⬇ Short Sword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the kobold dragonshield's next turn.	
Dragonshield Tactics (immediate reaction, when an adjacent enemy shifts away or an enemy moves adjacent; at-will)	
The kobold dragonshield shifts 1 square.	
Mob Attack	
The kobold dragonshield gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls per kobold ally adjacent to the target.	
Shifty (minor; at-will)	
The kobold shifts 1 square.	
Trap Sense	
The kobold gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against traps.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Draconic
Skills Acrobatics +5, Stealth +7, Thievery +7	
Str 14 (+3)	Dex 13 (+2) Wis 12 (+2)
Con 12 (+2)	Int 9 (+0) Cha 10 (+1)
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, short sword	

2 Kobold Miners (M) Level 1 Minion Skirmisher	
Small natural humanoid (reptile)	XP 25
Initiative +4 Senses Perception +1; darkvision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 15; Fortitude 11, Reflex 13, Will 11; see also <i>trap sense</i>	
Speed 6	
⬇ Pick (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+6 vs. AC; 4 damage (crit 6).	
⌚ Small Rock (standard; at-will)	
Ranged 5; +6 vs. AC; 3 damage.	
Shifty (minor; at-will)	
The kobold shifts 1 square as a minor action.	
Trap Sense	
The kobold gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against traps.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Draconic
Str 8 (-1)	Dex 14 (+2) Wis 12 (+1)
Con 12 (+1)	Int 9 (-1) Cha 10 (+0)
Equipment leather armor, war pick, backpack	

2 Kobold Slingers (S) Level 1 Artillery	
Small natural humanoid (reptile)	XP 100
Initiative +3 Senses Perception +1; darkvision	
HP 24; Bloodied 12	
AC 13; Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 12; see also <i>trap sense</i>	
Speed 6	
⬇ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+5 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.	
⌚ Sling (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 10/20; +6 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage; see also <i>special shot</i> .	
Special Shot	
The kobold slinger can fire special ammunition from its sling. It typically carries 3 rounds of special shot, chosen from the types listed below. A special shot attack that hits deals normal damage and has an additional effect depending on its type:	
<i>Stinkpot:</i> The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).	
<i>Firepot (Fire):</i> The target takes ongoing 2 fire damage (save ends).	
<i>Gluepot:</i> The target is immobilized (save ends).	
Shifty (minor; at-will)	
The kobold shifts 1 square.	
Trap Sense	
The kobold gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against traps.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Draconic
Str 9 (-1)	Dex 17 (+3) Wis 12 (+1)
Con 12 (+1)	Int 9 (-1) Cha 10 (+0)
Equipment leather armor, dagger, sling	

**Warded Desk
Trap****Level 1 Warder**
XP 100**Trap:** A 4-by-4 section of the floor is ringed with runes.**Perception**

No check is necessary to notice the glowing runes.

Additional Skill: Arcana♦ **DC 15:** The character notices that anyone crossing the runes is attacked by a sonic pulse that can temporarily disable them.**Trigger**

The trap attacks when a creature enters one of the trap's four squares.

Attack**Immediate Reaction****Close Burst 1****Attack:** +4 vs. Fortitude**Hit:** The target takes 1d6 damage and is dazed until the end of its next turn.**Countermeasures**

- ♦ Saying the command word makes the trap ignore a character for 24 hours.
- ♦ An adjacent character can disable the trap for 5 minutes with a DC 15 Thievery check.
- ♦ An adjacent character deciphers the runes and discovers the trap's command word with a DC 20 Arcana check.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The glowing runes around the desk and magic circle illuminate the room with dim light.

Collapsed Wall: The wall the kobolds broke through lies in pieces on the floor and now counts as difficult terrain.

Pile of Books: The books are in very poor condition due to centuries of abuse by the elements, but with some study it can be determined that these books deal with esoteric arcane knowledge, such as the creation of magical items or the history of the Elemental Chaos. A PC could repair the books with a Make Whole ritual, but doing so would take over 3 hours to repair all twenty books. Each repaired book is worth 10 gp to a historian. (After including the cost of the ritual, the PCs gain 160 gp, approximately one

treasure parcel.) This is a good opportunity to introduce alchemical formulas or ritual books if desired for your campaign.

If hired to recover Emeranith's stolen books, they are found here. The books include information about the history of the local lands, especially the period before the meteor hit.

Desk: the desk contains *Voran's eternal chalk* and a few scraps of paper written in a goliath dialect of Dwarven. The paper is yellowed with age, but some writing can be deciphered, including a fragment from a journal:

It is fitting that the lantern's elemental flame grants access to my library; only the knowledge in these books has granted me the power to tame the elements. My mastery over earth and stone continues to grow. I excavated the Tomb in record time and the portal opens perfectly when I blow the whistle.

I wish I did not need a tomb, but I've chased off too many grave robbers over the past few months. I could not risk Locantra's body being stolen. I moved entire blocks of earth at once, but they are now safe deep underground—the dead shall lie in peace.

I have only one chamber left to build, but it will be the most difficult of all. I am almost finished with the key—just one final enchantment and the battle standard will be complete.

Caved-In Passage: The short passage collapsed when the meteor struck, isolating the library from outside. Clearing out the tunnel would be as much work as digging a new tunnel. The end of the passage counts as difficult terrain.

Alchemical Bench: Most of the ingredients on the bench are dried up and useless. PCs searching the desk find two vials of alchemist's acid (*Adventurer's Vault*, page 24) and 50 gp of alchemical reagents.

Portal: The portal in the corner leads to the final room in this portion of Voran's library, and encounter L3.

L3: THE INNER SANCTUM

Encounter Level 4 (875 XP)

SETUP

Hesskin, dragonborn hunter (H)

Nibbik, kobold wyrm Priest (N)

2 kobold slingers (S)

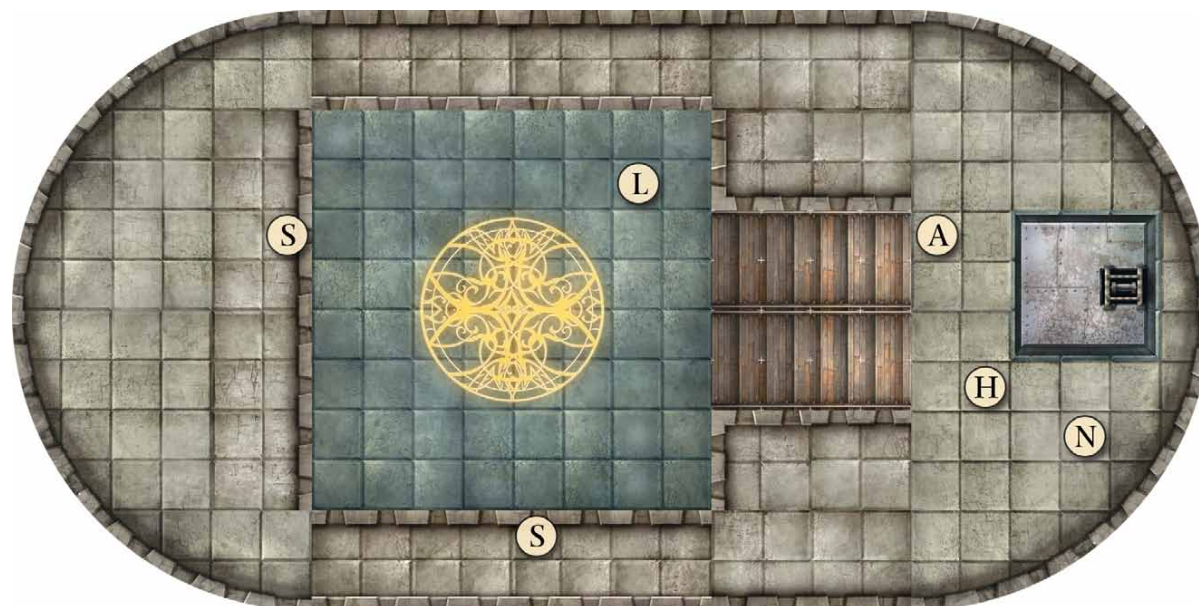
1 arbalester (A)

This is Voran's inner sanctum, the heart of his distributed laboratories buried deep underground. Hesskin and Nibbik only recently started exploring this chamber when the PCs interrupt them.

When the PCs enter this room, read:

As you step through the portal, you feel your bodies shifted through miles of rock in a moment that feels both instantaneous and endless. You feel your form coalesce in a rocky chamber standing in a glowing yellow circle. A hovering lantern stands a short distance away, illuminating the room. Before you is a wooden staircase leading up to the rest of the room. At the top of the stairs stands a dragonborn clad in scale next to a small ballista that swivels, of its volition, in your direction.

If any of the kobolds escaped from encounter L1 and the party hasn't taken an extended rest, Hesskin immediately fires a crossbow bolt at the first character that comes out of the portal, beginning combat.



Perception DC 15: The character spots the rest of the kobolds. If the adventurers are unaware of the kobolds, the creatures have combat advantage when they make their first attack.

Three kobolds skirt the perimeter of the room, getting ready to attack!

TACTICS

Hesskin prefers to start the combat by firing his crossbow from the top of the stairs, defending the arbalester from attack. Hesskin is patient—he won't rush into melee until the kobold slingers, the arbalester, or Nibbik are overwhelmed.

The arbalester's guarded area is the 4-square by 4-square magic circle in the middle of the room; if any PC is in that area at the start of the arbalester's turn, the arbalester recharges its *double shot* power. The arbalester moves only when necessary.

The kobold slingers are crafty—they use their *gluepot special shot* against enemies in the magic circle, providing the arbalester ample targets for its attacks.

Nibbik is a coward and tries to keep Hesskin between himself and the PCs. Nibbik uses *incite faith* early in the encounter to protect his slingers. Once Hesskin is defeated, Nibbik surrenders. He prefers to surrender to a dragonborn PC if possible, pledging himself and the remaining kobolds to do the heroes' will.

Hesskin, Dragonborn Hunter (H)	Level 4 Elite Brute
Medium natural humanoid	XP 350
Initiative +4 Senses Perception +3	
HP 138; Bloodied 69	
AC 16; Fortitude 18; Reflex 16; Will 15	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 5	
Action Points 1	
⚔ Longsword (at-will; standard) ♦ Weapon	
+7 vs. AC; +8 while bloodied; 1d8 + 6 damage.	
🏹 Crossbow (at-will; standard) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 15/30; +7 vs. AC; +8 while bloodied; 1d8 + 4 damage.	
⚔ Cleave (at-will; standard) ♦ Weapon	
+7 vs. AC; +8 while bloodied; 1d8 + 6 damage, and another enemy adjacent to Hesskin takes 6 damage	
⚔ Powerful Slice (standard; recharge [1]) ♦ Weapon	
+7 vs. AC; +8 while bloodied; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.	
🐉 Dragon Breath (encounter; minor) ♦ Cold	
Close blast 3; +7 vs. Reflex; +8 while bloodied; 1d8 + 3 cold damage.	
Alignment Evil Languages Common, Draconic	
Skills Endurance +11, Intimidate +6	
Str 17 (+5) Dex 15 (+4) Wis 13 (+3)	
Con 19 (+6) Int 12 (+3) Cha 9 (+1)	
Equipment scale armor, longsword, crossbow, 30 crossbow bolts	

Nibbik, Kobold Wyrmpriest (N)	Level 3 Artillery (Leader)
Small natural humanoid	XP 150
Initiative +4 Senses Perception +4; darkvision	
HP 36; Bloodied 18	
AC 15; Fortitude 13; Reflex 15; Will 15; see also <i>trap sense</i>	
Speed 6	
⚔ Spear (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+7 vs. AC; 1d8 damage.	
🌀 Energy Orb (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire	
Ranged 10; +6 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 3 fire damage.	
👁 Incite Faith (minor; encounter)	
Close burst 10; kobold allies in the burst gain 5 temporary hit points and shift 1 square.	
👁 Dragon Breath (standard; encounter) ♦ Fire	
Close blast 3; +6 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 3 fire damage. <i>Miss:</i> Half damage.	
Shifty (minor; at-will)	
The kobold shifts 1 square.	
Trap Sense	
The kobold gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against traps.	
Alignment Evil Languages Common, Draconic	
Skills Stealth +10, Thievery +10	
Str 9 (+0) Dex 16 (+4) Wis 17 (+4)	
Con 12 (+2) Int 9 (+0) Cha 12 (+2)	
Equipment hide armor, spear, bone mask	

2 Kobold Slingers (S)	Level 1 Artillery
Small natural humanoid (reptile)	XP 100
Initiative +3 Senses Perception +1; darkvision	
HP 24; Bloodied 12	
AC 13; Fortitude 12; Reflex 14; Will 12; see also <i>trap sense</i>	
Speed 6	
⚔ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+5 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage.	
🏹 Sling (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 10/20; +6 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage; see also <i>special shot</i> .	
Special Shot	
The kobold slinger can fire special ammunition from its sling. It typically carries 3 rounds of special shot, chosen from the types listed below. A special shot attack that hits deals normal damage and has an additional effect depending on its type:	
<i>Stinkpot:</i> The target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).	
<i>Firepot (Fire):</i> The target takes ongoing 2 fire damage (save ends).	
<i>Gluepot:</i> The target is immobilized (save ends).	
Shifty (minor; at-will)	
The kobold shifts 1 square.	
Trap Sense	
The kobold gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against traps.	
Alignment Evil Languages Common, Draconic	
Str 9 (-1) Dex 17 (+3) Wis 12 (+1)	
Con 12 (+1) Int 9 (-1) Cha 10 (+0)	
Equipment leather armor, dagger, sling	

Arbalester Level 4 Artillery

Medium immortal humanoid (construct, homunculus) XP 175

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +9; darkvision

HP 43; **Bloodied** 21

AC 16; **Fortitude** 15, **Reflex** 17, **Will** 15

Immune disease, poison

Speed 6

⬇ **Slam** (standard, at-will)

+11 vs. AC; 1d6+4 damage.

⚡ **Bolt** (standard, at-will)

Ranged 20/40; +11 vs. AC; 1d10+4 damage.

↘ **Double Shot** (standard, recharge ⏏ ⏏ ⏏)

The arbalester makes two bolt attacks, each against a different target. The targets must be within 5 squares of each other.

Guard Area

At the start of the arbalester's turn, if an enemy is in its guarded area, the arbalester recharges its *double shot* power.

Alignment Unaligned

Languages —

Str 15 (+4)

Dex 18 (+6)

Wis 15 (+4)

Con 13 (+3)

Int 5 (-1)

Cha 8 (+1)

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The floating lantern (L on the map) provides bright light to all squares on the lower platform and the stairs, but the rest of the chamber is dim light.

Lower Platform: The 8-square by 8-square platform with the magic circle is 2 squares below the rest of the room. The walls count as a rough surface (Athletics DC 20 to climb.)

Stairs: The stairs count as difficult terrain.

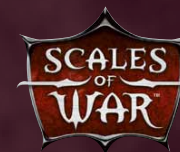
Portal Circle: This circle is a link to all of Voran's chambers. While *Voran's floating lantern* illuminates the circle, the portal to the library remains open. If a character that searches the circle succeeds at a DC 15 Perception check, they notice the ground around the circle is covered with a fine red chalk dust. Once the lantern no longer illuminates the circle, the portal closes.

If another one of Voran's item keys is used by the circle, a portal opens allowing access to another chamber. *Voran's floating lantern* creates the link to the library. If *Voran's eternal chalk* is used to draw a red line in the circle, a portal is opened to Voran's study, area A2 in the Chaos Scar adventure "Stick in the Mud". (If the keep has not been explored, describe a thick mud slowly coming through the portal if it is activated.) The portal remains open until the party takes an extended rest.

Hatch: The hatch requires a DC 20 Athletics check to open. Below the hatch is a set of circular stairs that lead to a small living area that provides enough room for the characters to take an extended rest. The hatch can be bolted from within (Thievery DC 20 to open). The living area is enchanted, providing individual resting chambers for up to ten creatures. The name of each of the PCs is written on one of these doors. Items left in the chamber will be there when the owner returns.

About the Author

Peter Lee works as a game designer for Wizards of the Coast, where he splits his time between RPG design and leading the design for *D&D Miniatures*.



THOSE ONCE LOYAL

By Robert J. Schwallb

An adventure for 25th-level characters

illustrations by William O'Connor

cartography by Mike Schley

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“All that happens now has happened before and shall happen again unless we choose otherwise. Since the hated struggle against the elemental host in that storied event recalled as the Dawn War, we have seen the divided god wage endless war as it seeks to reconcile its sundered existence. Over the eons, the platinum wrestles with the chromatic, using and discarding us as they will to slake their thirst for vengeance. Our late patron defeated the enemy, and the enemy has defeated our patron. Time and again they fight, but to what end? One triumphs only to fall as the other gains ascendancy. I have peered through time’s mists, apprehended the distant future, and can see no end to this struggle. My despair at the eternal war impels me to beseech your esteemed council, to urge you to let the Platinum Dragon’s death be the last and to help me put an end to this age-old cycle for all time. Fellow dragons, the time to decide is now.”

EPIC

21-30

“Those Once Loyal” is an adventure for five 25th-level characters. By the end, the characters should be mid-way through 27th level. This adventure builds on the events described in the Scales of War adventure path, but you can adapt it for use in your own campaign or as a one-shot adventure for epic level adventurers.

BACKGROUND

Bahamut is mostly dead . . . but not entirely so. A remnant lives on, hidden away and kept safe by a servant created for just this purpose. In Bahamut’s unfathomable wisdom, he anticipated the end Tiamat intended for him, extracted a portion of his divine essence, and bequeathed it to an unwitting vessel. That vessel is Amyria. Should the unthinkable happen (as it has), the essence would guide Amyria to her ultimate purpose.

At least, that’s the plan.

Keeping the plan a secret was central to Bahamut’s agenda. Although Amyria is capable, as are her companions, Tiamat would destroy her in a moment if she knew what the deva carried within her. No plan is safe when there are those who can peer into the future and trace fate’s threads to their possible outcomes.

One such being to identify Bahamut’s intent was the mithral dragon Dakranad, a historian and philosopher who dwelled in Bahamut’s palace. Any who are close to the Platinum Dragon are aware that the struggle between Bahamut and Tiamat is no new thing. It has raged for countless millennia, all the way back to the Dawn War when Bahamut and Tiamat were born from Io’s sundered form. Dakranad knew that Bahamut’s death, while tragic, would bring an end to the war and spare the lives of generations to come. This fact comforted Dakranad. He was shaken

when he received a vision of Bahamut’s rebirth, because he knew that if his master returned, the wars would continue forever. The only solution was to claim Bahamut’s mantle and assume his place.

For all his intellect and foresight, Dakranad failed to recognize his hubris when he approached the seven gold dragons who advised their master. Dakranad gave an impassioned speech, explaining the histories and their consequences and the dangers yet to come should Bahamut be permitted to continue his struggle. He beseeched the dragons to elevate him so he could take the Platinum Dragon’s place and bring the costly war to an end. His audience was both delighted that Bahamut would return and horrified by the dragon’s offer. They were so offended that they tossed the mithral dragon out from Celestia and unknowingly placed him in the clutches of an insidious enemy who wanted vengeance for himself.

Enter Dispater. Bahamut and Tiamat caused the archdevil endless trouble with their squabbling. Dispater lost his prized prisoner (Gith), had his aspect murdered, and saw any chance at claiming the gith-yanki dashed for the foreseeable future. The only way for Dispater to salvage his situation was to claim the god’s essence for himself and either keep it tucked away in his iron citadel or use it to remove Asmodeus and elevate himself to master of the Nine Hells.

Dakranad was skeptical about an alliance with the archdevil, knowing enough to realize the peril in dealing with such a fiend. Yet Dakranad’s desperation undid his reservations and allowed him to be swayed by the archdevil’s honeyed words. Dispater assured the dragon that they would attain a bloodless victory, and with his support they could seize Amyria when she entered Celestia and prevent her from becoming Bahamut with little trouble at all.

Backed by a legion of devils, Dakranad and Dispater slipped into Celestia, moved to the Shining Bastion, Bahamut’s palace, and seized the stronghold by force. The gold dragons would not kneel before them, even when faced by a devil and his army. The gold dragons fought; Dakranad and his allies won; Bahamut’s palace was theirs.

It wasn’t until the last gold dragon lay dying on the floor that Dakranad realized his crime’s enormity. His intent was never power but to save lives. The dead dragons’ glassy eyes reflected his corruption, but instead of retreating from his wickedness, he resolved to see his plan to its conclusion and right his wrongs. He would lead Celestia into a bright future, free from conflict and strife, and free from Io’s legacy for all time.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The *arrow of fate* recovered in “Legacy of Io” points to Celestia as the place to restore Bahamut to life. The visions assailing Amyria are beginning to weaken her, however, and if not stopped, may very well kill her. Using her *spelljammer*, the adventurers travel to Empyron to seek clues about how they might resurrect the fallen god and also to cure the deva. Once there, Dakranad’s agents strike the city of healing. While battling the dragons and angels, infernal assassins slip behind the characters to kidnap Amyria and bring her back to their master.

Whether or not the devils succeed, the characters learn Amyria is in fact the vessel and key to Bahamut’s recovery. An old ally, Kalad, whose soul was spared and transformed into an exalted, points to Torzak-Belgirn to find answers to their questions. If the devils did succeed, the dragon attack points to Dakranad, and the characters can easily discover

THE QUESTS

In “Those Once Loyal,” the characters must escort Amyria to her destiny to claim the birthright bestowed upon her by Bahamut. As the adventure unfolds, the characters have chances to earn quest XP.

Minor Quest—Discover Amyria’s Destiny

Empyron, city of healing, is the best chance to discover what force works against Amyria. The healers there reveal the truth about her condition, explaining she carries within her a god’s essence. This information establishes her as one critical part in restoring Bahamut to life.

Reward: 7,000 XP.

Minor Quest—Save Amyria from Dakranad

The mithral dragon covets Amyria’s power and seeks to use it so he can assume Bahamut’s place. His agents attempt a kidnapping at Empyron. If the characters would resurrect Bahamut, they must thwart the kidnapping attempt or later rescue her.

Reward: 9,000 XP.

Minor Quest—Thwart Dispater

Angered over losing Gith from his iron fortress in the Nine Hells, Dispater hopes to claim Bahamut’s essence for himself, which he sees as an even greater prize than the githyanki matriarch. By defeating Dispater, the adventurers clear another obstruction to restoring the Platinum Dragon.

Reward: 9,000 XP.

that the mithral dragon has decreed himself heir to Bahamut’s throne and most likely lairs there.

Minor Quest—Defeat the Mithral Dragon

The greatest obstacle to Bahamut’s rebirth is not Tiamat but rather one of his own children, the mithral dragon named Dakranad. The dragon will stop at nothing to ensure Bahamut remains dead and claim his place. The characters must defeat the dragon in order to complete their quest.

Reward: 11,000 XP.

Minor Quest—Recover the Creation Spark

Amyria is not enough to see Bahamut restored: the adventurers must secure a creation spark from Moradin’s Forge. Placing the spark in Amyria’s hands allows Bahamut’s essence to fully awaken and return to the world as he was.

Reward: 11,000 XP.

Major Quest—Restore Bahamut to Life

To complete the rebirth, the adventurers usher Amyria across the Bridge of al-Sihal. To do that, they must convince the archangel guardian of their cause’s worthiness. Once Amyria crosses into the light at the end, the transformation begins and Bahamut is reborn.

Reward: 110,000 XP.

The characters have two choices. They can go to the Platinum Dragon’s redoubt where, if Amyria

was captured, she most likely waits for them; or they can push on to Moradin’s Forge via Torzak-Belgirn. Whichever path they choose, they will need to go back and deal with the other.

At Bahamut’s Palace, the characters find the stronghold empty and the Halls of Reflection overrun by devils. Battling through the defenders, the characters learn more of Dakranad’s plot, Dispater’s agenda, and how Bahamut planned for his death all along. If Amyria is kidnapped, the characters don’t find her here, but they do learn the mithral dragon carried her to Moradin’s Forge to acquire the creation spark for himself, the catalyst necessary to restore the god.

Turning to Moradin’s Forge, the heroes find only enemies. With the god’s forces arrayed against them, the adventurers must push their way through the defenders to reach the godforge, where they hope to find Amyria, secure a creation spark, or both. The aspect of Moradin awaits them there, and the characters learn the divine avatar was turned against them by their enemy. The characters must defeat the aspect or convince him of their righteous purpose. In either event, victorious characters may secure the creation spark, but if Amyria is missing, they learn the mithral dragon is a step ahead of them again and racing to the Bridge of al-Sihal to complete his own apotheosis.

The adventure concludes with a race across Celestia, the heroes working to cut off the dragon before he can cross into the golden radiance at the bridge’s end and claim Bahamut’s power for himself. The final scene sees the adventures embroiled in a three-way fight against Dakranad and the archangel guardian who protects the holy bridge. Should the characters succeed, Amyria, who has known the truth all along, finds the courage to carry the creation spark into the light and assume the mantle thrust upon her.

PREPARING FOR ADVENTURE

“Those Once Loyal” gives the player characters a chance to undue Tiamat’s plotting and deliver a terrible blow to the goddess, a setback that could unravel all her plans and mark the final turning point in the war. The characters travel to a plane of light and unsullied goodness only to find its sanctity compromised by misguided intent and fathomless greed. The adventurers must face off against powerful foes, stir a god’s heart, and send a friend to certain death in the hope of saving all creation from Tiamat’s tyranny.

The adventure should begin just after the characters retrieve the *arrow of fate* as described in “Legacy of Io.” When you are ready to begin, go to “Grim Reunion” on page 33.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

You’ll find everything you need to run the adventure contained in the following pages, including the background information presented above, setup, and tactical encounters that include statistics blocks and maps for each combat encounter. If you need more information on how to use the tactical encounter format, see a previous Scales of War adventure, such as “Garaitha’s Anvil.” Also, *Manual of the Planes* and *Plane Above* provide additional information on Celestia, while *Draconomicon 2* gives added insight into mithral dragons.

TREASURE PREPARATION

“Those Once Loyal” uses the treasure parcel system described in the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*. The characters should gain a total of eighteen treasure parcels. The Treasure Parcels sidebar lists the most likely places to find parcels. You can fill in the blanks with the parcel numbers noted. Magic items ought to come from the players’ wish lists, with most of the higher-level items appearing in parcels found later in the adventure.

TREASURE PARCELS

Parcel A: _____, D. Covered Retreat
Parcel B: _____, D. Covered Retreat
Parcel C: _____, G. Bahamut’s Throne
Parcel D: _____, G. Bahamut’s Throne
Parcel E: _____, G. Bahamut’s Throne
Parcel F: _____, I. Accidental Prisoners
Parcel G: _____, I. Accidental Prisoners
Parcel H: _____, I. Accidental Prisoners
Parcel I: _____, L. A Thousand Teeth
Parcel J: _____, N. Forgeworks
Parcel K: _____, N. Forgeworks
Parcel L: _____, N. Forgeworks
Parcel M: _____, P. Moradin’s Forge
Parcel N: _____, P. Moradin’s Forge
Parcel O: _____, P. Moradin’s Forge
Parcel P: _____, P. Moradin’s Forge
Parcel Q: _____, Q. War for Heaven
Parcel R: _____, Q. War for Heaven

Based on the guidelines in the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*, the following parcels can go in spaces above. Pick items from your players’ wish list to populate magic items.

Parcel 1: Magic item, level 30
Parcel 2: Magic item, level 30
Parcel 3: Magic item, level 29
Parcel 4: Magic item, level 28
Parcel 5: Magic item, level 28

Parcel 6: Magic item, level 27

Parcel 7: Magic item, level 26

Parcel 8: ritual scroll of Imprisonment (*Arcane Power*, page 156) and Voice of Fate, 3 *potions of recovery*

Parcel 9: pouch with 70 pp and 20 diamonds (5,000 gp each), ritual scroll containing Ease Spirit (*Divine Power*, page 157) and True Portal, phial containing 50,000 gp of residuum

Parcel 10: 100 platinum ingots (worth 5,000 gp each), gold statue depicting Moradin at the forge (60,000 gp)

Parcel 11: 1,250 pp, 2 *caustic whetstones* (level 30, *Adventurer’s Vault*, page 190)

Parcel 12: 1,750 pp, 50,000 gp of residuum contained in a Celestial steel box (worth 50,000 gp), miscellaneous godforged components (worth 100,000 gp total)

Parcel 13: 300 pp, platinum tiara set with sapphires (50,000 gp), gown woven from inert astral fire and studded with fire rubies (100,000 gp), mithral scepter studded with astral diamonds (100,000 gp), 2 *potions of resistance* (level 24, *Adventurer’s Vault*, page 188)

Parcel 14: 25 ad, 1 *potion of recovery*

Parcel 15: 200 pp, 9 gold dragon statuettes (20,000 gp each)

Parcel 16: 9 ad, 50 pp, a mithral statuette depicting Bahamut (50,000 gp), *augmenting whetstone* (level 26, *Adventurer’s Vault*, page 190)

Parcel 17: 1 *potion of life*

Parcel 18: 6 diamonds (5,000 gp each)

VITAL INFORMATION

This adventure reveals the methods required to restore Bahamut to life. While running the adventure, be sure to keep the following points in mind and make sure the players understand them by the adventure's conclusion.

- ◆ Long ago, Bahamut enshrined his essence in a simple platinum sword and hid the relic in the natural world as insurance against the time when Tiamat would resume their age-old struggle.
- ◆ Not long after Tiamat sparked the war, Bahamut awoke the platinum sword. The weapon assumed the form of a deva who took the name Amyria. To protect Bahamut's essence, the deva knew nothing of who she was or what role she would play in the event of Bahamut's death.
- ◆ Once Bahamut was slain, the essence stirred within the vessel, impelling her to restore the god to his true form. The Platinum Dragon never intended the vessel to acquire a personality, and thus the divine nature, as it fights to become free, is inadvertently killing her.
- ◆ Amyria is nothing more than a means to an end. Her annihilation is regrettable, but there is no other way to restore Bahamut.
- ◆ Amyria is not enough. She must carry a creation spark into the golden radiance at the end of the Bridge of al-Sihal. By entering the light, Amyria can merge with the creation spark and begin her transformation into Bahamut.
- ◆ A powerful angel guards the way into the Bastion of Souls and permits no creature to cross the Bridge without divine decree. The *arrow of fate* is the arrow that slew Bahamut once long ago and remains a mighty weapon. Using it against the archangel will permit Amyria to pass without harm.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The amount of time between this adventure and the last is up to you. During the characters' efforts to recover the *arrow of fate*, Amyria was looking into the intense visions troubling her since Bahamut's death. Should the adventurers need time to create or purchase magic items, follow up on other leads, or need an extra encounter or two to bring them to 25th level, stall this adventure's start.

A GRIM REUNION

Amyria finds the adventurers. During her travels, she acquired a *spelljammer* named *Mercy's Blessing* and searched the planes for answers to her visions as well as information on how to use the *arrow of fate*. Amyria is exhausted by her efforts, and the visions have only grown worse. When she rejoins the adventurers, it's clear she's sick. It's clear that if something is not done soon, this unknown plague might kill her.

Amyria changes the subject should the characters ask after her, turning their attention to the item they recovered. When the characters produce the item, it swivels in their hand and points toward the deva. No matter where the character moves, the arrow shifts its position so it maintains its direction. When offered, Amyria takes the *arrow of fate*, and her eyes open wide, her mouth falls open, and she collapses. A moment later she recovers.

Amyria blinks and gasps and shudders. She pulls herself to her feet and looks at you. A moment passes before she says, "The visions are correct. Bahamut lives. Celestia. We . . . must . . . answers there." She collapses once again.

Amyria still lives, but she doesn't respond to efforts to help her. Any character trained in Heal sees she's in a coma and her condition worsens. Characters seeking more concrete answers have a few options.

Characters trained in Arcana or Religion know Celestia is an astral dominion and is home to Kord, Moradin, and Bahamut when he lived. It is a holy place where virtue and courage are celebrated and where great heroes may become exalted and lend their power to the dominion's defense. A DC 26 Religion check recalls Celestia is also home to Empyron, the City of Healing, where ailments have no hold.

Alternatively, the adventurers might use rituals to ferret out the answers to their questions.

Consult Oracle: Characters using this ritual receive one-word answers to their questions. Use Vital Information on this page to guide your answers.

Consult Mystic Sages: Information gained from this ritual also draws from Vital Information presented on this page.

Divine Sight (*Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*): A character benefiting from this ritual recognizes that the *arrow of fate* serves Bahamut and also identifies Bahamut's essence roiling inside Amyria.

History Revealed (*Arcane Power*): Any character who performs this ritual witnesses key scenes from the campaign involving Amyria, but the most important scene is the recovery of the platinum sword in "Rescue at Rivenroar" (*Dungeon* 156).

Loremaster's Bargain: This ritual provides the surest information the adventurers need to gather information described under Vital Information. The entity called forth protects Bahamut's secret, however, and so urges the characters to transport Amyria to Celestia, where she will be at least one step closer to realizing her purpose.

REACHING CELESTIA

Traveling to an astral dominion is simple work for epic level characters, but Amyria's *spelljammer* can bridge the distance provided they have the Plane Shift ritual (*Manual of the Planes*, page 150). Amyria knows the ritual, but she's in no condition to perform it herself. If the characters themselves lack the ritual, they might find a ritual scroll (be sure to deduct 17,000 gp from a monetary treasure parcel) in Amyria's quarters. Alternatively, acquiring the ritual might prove an interesting side-trek if the characters aren't quite to 25th level.

Mercy's Blessing

Gargantuan vehicle

HP 500 **Space** 4 squares by 8 squares

AC 3; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 2

Speed fly 12 (hover), overland flight 15

Pilot

The pilot must sit at the spelljammer helm, at the vessel's rear.

Crew

In addition to the pilot, the vehicle requires a crew of five, all of whom use a standard action each round to help control the vessel. Reduce the vehicle's fly speed by 4 squares for each missing crewmember. At fly speed 0, the vehicle is unable to travel and flies out of control.

Load

Thirty Medium creatures; forty tons of cargo.

Out of Control

When out-of-control, the vehicle moves forward at half speed (not including any modifiers for its sails). Each round, it has a 75% chance of descending. It descends 5 squares for the first 10 rounds it's out of control. After 10 rounds, it descends 10 squares per round. If the vehicle hits the ground while out-of-control after descending more than 20 squares, it is destroyed.

Sails

The vehicle takes a penalty or bonus to its fly speed from -4 to +4 depending on the strength and direction of the wind.

Spelljammer Helm (Navigation Focus)

This vehicle is equipped with a spelljamming helm which is the navigation focus for the Plane Shift ritual.

The trouble with the Plane Shift ritual is that it requires the characters to name a specific location they have visited once before or name a plane. Completing the ritual deposits the characters some distance away from the named destination or at a random location on the plane. Assuming the characters have never visited Empyron before and perform the rituals, the adventurers appear in the air floating above Bahamut's Palace (proceed to Part Three). If the characters have been to Empyron before and get a 30 or higher on their Arcana check, they're close enough to Empyron to close the distance in short order (proceed to Part One). Failing this, the characters wind up at the Palace as above.

On the off chance that no character has the Ritual Caster feat, they will need to find someone to perform the ritual on their behalf. Use any suitable NPC to whom the characters have grown close to do the job, but the characters will still need to supply the residuum.

In the end, allow the characters to reach Celestia with little effort.

CELESTIA

Celestia, the Radiant Throne, is a wholesome and virtuous plane, a realm of seven magnificent mountains whose peaks shine with inner light. This plane is home to Bahamut, Kord, and Moradin, and the three deities combine their power to combat evil. Moradin is the first of equals and both Bahamut and Kord accede to his wishes.

The plane consists of a range of seven peaks, about 120 miles long and wide. Each mount climbs some 10 miles up to blue skies above. The plane exerts normal gravity, and the deities can control their environs.

Radiance Affinity: Creatures gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls using radiant powers. Creatures deal only half damage with attacks using necrotic damage (though ongoing necrotic damage is unaffected).

Current Developments: Bahamut's death drew Kord and Moradin from their respective realms to respond to Tiamat's machinations. Both gods left their dominion and council with other gods to determine how they should respond to decide. Kord's halls are beyond this adventure's scope, but Moradin left an aspect to oversee his forge behind Rainfather's Beard.

PART ONE: THE CITY OF HEALING

The gentlest peak of the Seven Mounting Heavens is Jusor. Travelers can ascend to its high vales by way of the wide slopes, whose pitches are intended not to tax the traveler too greatly but rather to invite them onward to Empyron far above. Not long after a traveler makes the ascent, the City of Healing's alabaster towers come into view, graceful spires with fluted columns and wide, arcing bridges spanning the distance between them. The white walls bounding the city bear the merciful visages and snapping gold banners declaring the city's devotion to life and living. Through the open gates one finds broad avenues sheltered by the spreading boughs of massive oaks to dampen the sun's brilliance. From any point in the city, one can just make out the still black waters on whose shores the city stands. No ripple mars its glassy surface and unseen stars reflect their light off its still waters.

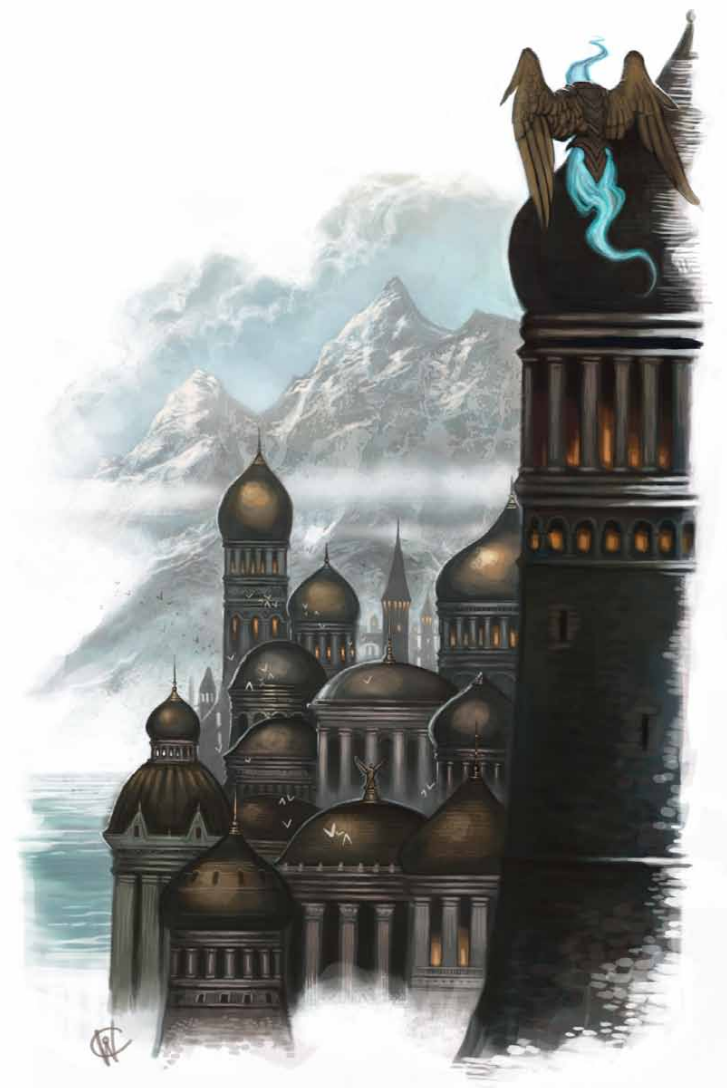
The City of Healing welcomes all, offering succor to those in need. Within its walls, curses melt, injuries heal, and diseases flee. Characters suffering any injuries, curses, diseases, or other persistent ailments find them lifted upon entering the city, yet Amyria does not stir from her sleep.

Whether the characters entered the city on foot or landed the *spelljammer* in a clearing, the city's healers find them:

A nearby tower's massive doors swing on silent hinges to reveal a brightly lit and airy hall. Six attendants emerge, carrying crystalline goblets, cool cloths, and platters bearing succulent fruit. Each attendant wears diaphanous

white robes and a silver mask, concealing gender and features. As one, they turn to the deva and converge to attend to her hurts.

The attendants are exalted, chosen by the gods to give comfort to the suffering. Their sole purpose is to heal the sick and, despite their strange, silent behavior, they mean Amyria no harm. They try to take Amyria and bring her inside the tower, where they can assess whatever assails her. If any character moves against the attendants or stops them from taking Amyria, they as one retreat to the doors, cocking their heads in confusion, watching and waiting to see what the characters do next. A character who attacks an attendant causes all six to disappear and shutters to them every door and every window in Empyron, barring all access to any chambers, thus denying their aid for as long as you deem sufficient.



AN OLD FRIEND

Whether or not the characters allow the attendants to spirit Amyria away, a short, stocky attendant joins the rest. Like the others, he wears white robes, but he lacks a mask. Characters who knew Kalad in life recognize him immediately.

When Kalad perished in “Throne of the Stone-Skinned King” (*Dungeon* 166), Moradin took pity on this dedicated servant and called his spirit from the Shadowfell to serve in the afterlife as he did in life. Kalad lends his aid to Empyron, learning the ancient healing arts passed down for millennia. He remembers little from his life, but he recalls familiar faces. His face splits into a grin as he welcomes the heroes to the City of Healing.

After a few friendly exchanges, the characters can question the dwarf as they like. Typical answers follow typical questions below.

What are you doing here? I thought you were dead! Indeed I was, friend, but Moradin still had need for this old dwarf. I’ve come to learn the healing arts and lend my aid in what feeble ways I can.

Who are these others in the city? Ah. They are exalted like myself. They intend no harm; their purpose is to help and nothing more.

Can we trust them with Amyria? Of course, you came here didn’t you? All are safe in the City of Healing.

Have you heard about Bahamut’s death? Who hasn’t? Things have been difficult since he died. Celestia readies for war.

What do you mean, difficult? Bahamut’s passing is grievous to be sure, but not all share this sentiment. Vultures have emerged to claim his mantle.

But Bahamut still lives! Does he now? That’s interesting . . . Where is he? Is this some sort of plot against Tiamat?

Couldn’t some essence of Bahamut have survived?

Hmm. If Bahamut’s essence lingers still, he is in grave danger, for Dakranad will not permit his return.

Who is Dakranad? Bahamut’s heir-apparent, an arrogant mithral dragon who claims to have visions or some such nonsense. He’s the one causing all the trouble.

What sort of trouble? There has been trouble at Bahamut’s palace. It seems the dragon has made foul alliances and driven out the proper custodians. Devils in Bahamut’s hall, can you imagine?

If we can restore Bahamut, he’ll certainly toss him out, won’t he? Most likely, but only if you succeed. Have you located his essence? (If yes) Amyria? Never guessed that one, though she was always a bit funny, I suppose. Well, it’s just a matter of extracting the essence then. This isn’t something healers can do here. You’d do best to sort this out with Moradin himself. If anyone would know how to put a god back together again, it’d be him. (If no) Well, once we see what’s wrong with Amyria, we can patch her up and maybe she’ll have answers for us.

Where would we find Moradin? That’s a question for sure. From what I hear, he’s already left Celestia with Kord to convene with the other gods about fighting Tiamat. Moradin would never leave his forge unguarded. I imagine he left behind his aspect to continue his work. I would check at Torzak-Belgirn to find him.

EVENT 1: SANCTITY VIOLATED

If the attendants carried Amyria into the great hall and the characters followed them inside, they find comfortable beds lining both sides for as far as they can see, suggesting the place is far larger inside than out. Whitewood arched doors lead off on all sides while glowing motes fill the room with cheery light. There are no other patients here. If they ask Kalad about this, the dwarf explains that there are others, but they are elsewhere in the city. The gods built the City of Healing during the Dawn War to attend to their soldiers. Such was the war’s scope that at one time, no bed lacked an injured hero and no hall stood empty.

While the attendants inspect Amyria, Dakranad’s servants strike the city.

Tactical Encounter: A. Dragon Strike (see page 45).

EVENT 2: KIDNAPPING

While the dragons and angels strike from overhead, Dispatser’s servants enter the hall from one of the side passages and abduct Amyria. Run this encounter only if one or more characters refuse to leave the deva’s side while the battle rages.

Tactical Encounter: B. Fiery Abduction (see page 48).

Adapting the Encounter: It’s likely the player characters will be busy fighting the silver dragons and thus unable to stop or confront the devils in this encounter. You can repurpose this encounter at any point later in the adventure. The devils might cause trouble for the characters in the Halls of Reflection or the characters might face them while snooping around at Torzak-Belgirn.

WHERE IS THE MITHRAL DRAGON?

The mithral dragon's prescience allows it to stay ahead of the characters until the end. If the devils kidnap Amyria, they deliver her to the dragon at the palace. Dakranad then moves to Torzak-Belgirn where he deceives the aspect of Moradin and convinces him that he plans to restore Bahamut and that the characters aim to stop him and save Amyria's life.

Characters going first to Bahamut's Palace just miss the dragon as he teleports to Moradin's Forge. Should the characters explore the Forge first, assume that Dakranad has already turned the aspect and gained the creation spark but lingers at the Palace to argue with Dispater for a bit before pushing on to the Bridge.

EVENT 3: HOT ON THE HEELS

This event occurs only if the characters give chase to the kidnapers or head into the Healing Hall to see where the would-be abductors came from. Deep within the Healing Hall are more fiends waiting to cover their allies' retreat.

Skill Challenge: C. Tracking the Devils (see page 49).

EVENT 4: DEVIL IN THE DETAILS

The kidnapers left a surprise for the adventurers. A pit fiend and a small force await the characters when they track the fleeing devils to the portal.

Tactical Encounter: D. Covered Retreat (see page 51).

EVENT 5: DIAGNOSIS AND REVELATIONS

Empyron attendants learned key information about Amyria, but the characters can learn this only if at least one attendant survived tactical encounter B or if the characters thwarted the kidnapping attempt and have other attendants inspect her. The characters can learn the following information from the attendants.

- ◆ Amyria does not have long to live.
- ◆ A powerful presence is using Amyria's body as fuel to sustain itself. If left alone, the spark will destroy itself and Amyria.
- ◆ The healers could extract the essence, but doing so would destroy it. If the essence is Bahamut, then doing so would prevent the god's return.
- ◆ If the characters piece this information together with the information gained from Kalad and suggest to the healers that the essence is in fact Bahamut, the healers declare that they cannot trigger the transformation. Only Moradin possesses the knowledge and means to reconstitute a dead god and he has withdrawn to Torzak-Belgirn, the forge city, where he musters his armies for war against Tiamat.

WHAT NEXT?

With the information learned from the healers, the characters have a few options. They might press ahead to Moradin's Forge (see Part Three) and seek an audience with the god, or they might head for Bahamut's Palace to rescue Amyria, figure out how the devils are involved, and perhaps defeat the mithral dragon (see Part Two). The characters have time to take an extended rest before heading off in either direction.

PART TWO: THE PLATINUM DRAGON'S FASTNESS

The characters have several reasons to explore Bahamut's Palace. The characters may venture here to rescue Amyria, they might come to the palace to learn more about Bahamut's plans, or they might visit the stronghold to defeat the mithral dragon and its allies. The characters can explore this location at any point during the adventure, but it should be before chasing down the dragon as described in Part Four.

Characters can reach the site easily. The portal in Part One takes the characters to area 1 at the palace. Otherwise, the characters can learn the castle's location from anyone at Empyron. It stands on a high spur on the mountain called Mertion. The characters can then use Amyria's *spelljammer* to reach the castle, a ritual (assume someone in Empyron has the sigil address for the castle's teleportation circle), or make an overland journey (the slowest and least likely, given the characters' levels). Characters walking and climbing to the stronghold must devote at least a week for travel and likely face additional encounters, at your discretion.

Aside from confronting the corrupted mithral dragon, the Halls of Reflection above the castle hold the secret to Bahamut's reconstitution and also the revelation that this struggle has happened before.

Regardless of when the characters tackle the site, neither the mithral dragon nor the council of seven gold dragons who once advised Bahamut are here. Instead, the characters find devils aplenty waiting for them. The mithral dragon made a bargain with a devil to gain support to claim Bahamut's place.

THE HALLS OF REFLECTION

The Platinum Dragon's palace stands on a spur not far below Mertion's peak. The stronghold is far larger than the area the characters will explore. The section concerning the adventurers is Bahamut's Halls of Reflection where, in life, the Platinum Dragon could meditate, monitor his mortal servants, and plan ways to counter Tiamat's plotting. Bahamut stored his most precious treasures in a vault hidden deep within the complex.

If the characters approach Bahamut's Palace by any means other than the portal, read:

A mighty fortress rises from an outcropping jutting out from the snowy mountain. Its gleaming walls catch and reflect the sun's brilliance. Wide towers thrust up, competing with the mountain itself for height, while dizzying ramparts festooned with draconic imagery promise no easy entry to would-be assailants. Your eye is drawn to a shimmering red light glowing from a small cluster of buildings above the fortress proper. The light seems out of place or wrong somehow.

The light the characters spot is the open portal to the Healing Hall of Part One. Characters are free to explore the rest of the palace as they like, and they find courtyards and halls, cavernous passages, and endless rooms, all scaled for gargantuan dragons. No one stirs in the castle proper and nothing has disturbed the furnishings or doors. The only exception is the Chamber of the Seven Dragons, a massive auditorium where seven gold dragons convened to advise Bahamut. In this sumptuous and wondrous room, the adventurers find seven dragon carcasses, butchered by devils.

FEATURES OF THE HALLS

Dispat's devils and a few angels loyal to the mithral dragon guard the Halls. Their master plumbs Bahamut's most private chambers in search of treasure. Most areas share common features.

Illumination: Bright light. Angelic radiance fills each chamber with soft white light.

Doors: Unless otherwise mentioned, doors are unlocked.

Outcropping: The Halls spread across several stone plinths above the castle itself. A fall from this area deposits a character in a courtyard 110 feet below and deals 11d10 damage.

Stairs: Squares containing stairs are difficult terrain.

Walls: Most walls are made from smooth alabaster, but beneath the glossy veneer, one can see draconic forms captured in the stone. Climbing the walls requires a DC 31 Athletics check.

KEYED LOCATIONS

The following locations correspond with those on the Halls of Reflection map.

1. PORTAL LANDING

Adventurers traveling by portal emerge here. Parties arriving by other means automatically see the portal's light. This area grants a breathtaking view of the mountains to all sides, but its openness leaves arrivals exposed.

Tactical Encounter: E. Hell's Fury (see page 54).

2. AIR BRIDGE

A wide bridge formed from force leads from the portal landing to the Hall of Reflection. The bridge is transparent, allowing those crossing it to see the courtyard over one hundred below their feet.

Tactical Encounter: E. Hell's Fury (see page 54).

3. CANARY COURTYARD

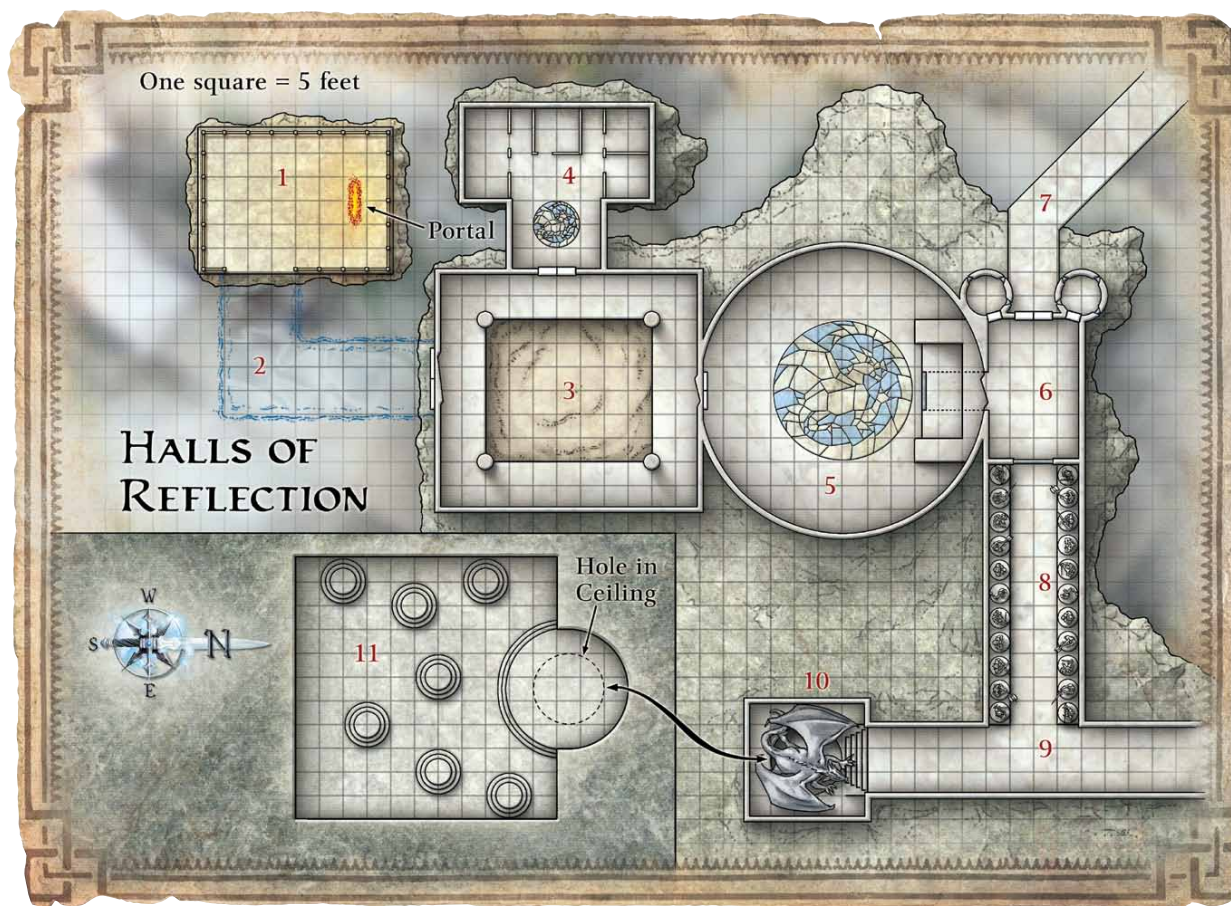
Bahamut and his attendants welcomed visitors through the doors or from overtop to this modest open-aided courtyard. A balcony rings the area and the upper doors lead to the Aerie, where Bahamut's guards await their master's next command.

Tactical Encounter: F. Devoted Guardians (see page 65).

4. ANGELIC AERIE

Angels need never sleep, but they do spend time in meditation to clear their minds of personality and individual will. Bahamut's angels use the privacy afforded by this chamber for just this purpose.

Tactical Encounter: F. Devoted Guardians (see page 65).



5. AUDIENCE CHAMBER

When Bahamut spent time in the Halls of Reflection, he would meet petitioners in this massive domed chamber.

Tactical Encounter: G. Bahamut's Throne (see page 57).

6. REAR GATE

Double doors behind the domed tower allow access to the interior and bypass the Canary Courtyard. The

doors open onto an empty hall with two more doors to either side. These doors allow passage into empty turrets.

Platinum seals block further passage into the complex unless the characters already defeated the godforged colossus in tactical encounter G, in which case the seals are open. If the characters have not yet defeated the colossus, the seal attacks as described on page 57.

7. SKY WALK

A wide bridge connects the Halls of Reflection to the mountain on which it stands. The bridge is 70 feet long and ends at a dark cavern, where a spiral staircase leads down to the fortress below. Characters needing to take an extended rest may do so here.

8. HALL OF CHAMPIONS

To reach his vault, Bahamut moved through this hall as a reminder of all the greatest mortal champions to sacrifice their lives in his name. The statues depict humans, dragonborn, elves, and other races. The statues change form, cycling through countless mortals who died in Bahamut's service. Anyone who spends time examining the statues can witness their transformation.

If any player characters were lost during the Scales of War campaign, consider adding their likenesses to the statues here.

9. SIGHING PASSAGE

Upon entering this hallway, the characters hear moaning and sighing echoing throughout the hall. Following the noise to their origin reveals different sized holes drilled into the far wall.

Tactical Encounter: H. No Sanctuary (see page 59).

10. CHAMBER OF THE SEAL

A deadly trap guards Bahamut's Retreat. Should any intruder draw too close, the trap unleashes destruction.

Tactical Encounter: H. No Sanctuary (see page 59).

11. BAHAMUT'S VAULT

Bahamut stored many treasures here, including magic items, relics, and other miscellaneous items of value only to the deity. Dakranad plundered much of the vault, but he left a few things here, including items that lured Dispaten into his present predicament.

Tactical Encounter: I. Accidental Prisoners (see page 60).

WHAT NEXT?

If the characters explored the Halls of Reflection first, it should be clear the dragon is headed for Moradin's Forge to acquire the creation spark, so a trip to Torzak-Belgirn is likely their next stop (see Part Three). If the characters have already acquired the creation spark, then they should learn from Dispaten that the dragon flies to the Bridge of al-Sihal to complete his own apotheosis (see Part Four).

PART THREE: RAINFATHER

Solania may not be the tallest mountain in Celestia, but it is a forbidding peak all the same. The mountain reveals its severe character where the rocky slopes break from the evergreen forest blanketing its lower slopes. Sheer cliffs, jagged spurs, and treacherous ravines promise a difficult time to climbers, and the ascent is made worse by the unexpected plumes venting from the mountain's interior. Steam clouds lift to join the ever-present mists concealing the mountain's zenith, yet no matter how dense, light flashes through the murky haze, hinting at the wonders created at Moradin's forge.

Solania, called Rainfather for the storms the dense clouds produce as well as the waterfalls spilling into rich mountain vales from the mountain's dizzying heights, houses the god Moradin and his servants. Corridors and chambers riddle the mountain's interior, some little more than crude caverns and others sumptuous halls built in the dwarven fashion. One could spend ten lifetimes exploring these chambers and never see them all, but what astonishing discoveries one might find in these endless passages pale compared to the innovation displayed in Torzak-Belgirn.

Torzak-Belgirn is a city built near Rainfather's peak. Spread across metal platforms by the score, the greatest artisans the planes have ever seen labor over hot forges to produce fine arms and armor, wondrous machines, innovative vehicles, and constructs from tiny insects to giant-sized centurions. The work performed here is not required and its workers are not slaves. Those who toil here do so for the love of their labor and also to honor the god who gave to them the intellect and desire to create.

The city atop the mountain is interesting enough to lure adventurers just to see its creations, but the player characters likely have other reasons to search out Rainfather. Based on information acquired thus far, the characters likely come to the mountain to seek out the creation spark to serve as a catalyst for Amyria's transformation.

TORZAK-BELGIRN

The characters should have no trouble finding Rainfather or the metallic city at its peak. Amyria's *spelljammer* can descend from Mertion, where they found Empyron, or Solania, where they braved Bahamut's Halls of Reflection, and reach the lower mountain in short order. Characters traveling without the vessel should still have means to reach the city, but have Kalad or Empyron attendants supply stumped characters with the sigil address for a teleportation circle in the city if needed.

The characters aren't in Torzak-Belgirn long enough to make an extensive exploration of the city, but they can purchase supplies of their character level or less, rest if they haven't done so already, and determine how they might get an audience with Moradin or his representative. Such information is not easily acquired, and thus the characters must engage in a skill challenge if they would find Moradin's proxy.

Skill Challenge: J. Finding the Soulforge (see page 62).

RAINFATHER'S BEARD

A mighty waterfall named Rainfather's Beard conceals the entrance to the Soulforge. The rushing water, however, is not the only guardian. During the Dawn War, Moradin defeated but spared a mighty storm titan. In exchange for its life, it agreed to serve

the god for ten thousand years. The storm titan dwells in the pool and emerges to deny access to the Soulforge to anyone it deems unworthy.

Tactical Encounter: K. The Rainfather's Thrall (see page 65).

THE SOULFORGE

The Soulforge is one of several sites in Celestia that connect to the Crucible of Light, an ancient fount from which all things are possible. Here Moradin fashions new creations, drawing energy from the roiling fires at his forge and imbuing them into the constructs he and his devoted servants create. The aspect of Moradin continues the god's work.

1. ENTRANCE

The Rainfather's Beard conceals the entrance to the Soulforge.

When the characters move through the waterfall, read:

A wide cavern extends into the mountain, then curves slightly to open into a much larger chamber. The fiery glow from red veins worming through the stone offers faint light.

Perception Check

DC 29: *An enormous shadow moves across the wall.*

2. DANK CAVERNS

These caverns house Morgol the Undying, a vicious hydra raised by Moradin to dissuade accidental guests from disturbing his work.

Tactical Encounter: L. A Thousand Teeth (see page 67).

3. HALL OF GRUDGES

This chamber recalls every creature and every power to have ever wronged Moradin.

When the characters enter this chamber, read:

Four grim statues carved to resemble dwarven warriors rest stony hands on axe handles, their weapons head down in front of their feet. Helmets cover their faces and long beards cover their chests. The walls between them move and writhe as faces and images swim up from swirling mists to stare with menace only to fade once more. Beatific faces compete

with monstrous visages, dragons and giants, demons and devils. It is a strange image parade with no apparent end.

Should the party need to take an extended rest, they can do so here.

4. HALL OF THE GODFORGED

Three sets of steel double doors block access to this chamber. It is here where Moradin keeps his prized creations.

Tactical Encounter: M. Godsworn Warriors (see page 68).

5. FORGEWORKS

Moradin's servants use this chamber to melt down damaged components. Although not intended as a weapon, the forgeworks can prove a dangerous obstacle.

Tactical Encounter: N. Forgeworks (see page 70).

6. PIT OF FORGOTTEN CREATIONS

Moradin discards those components he cannot use into this deep pit. A bridge spans the gap, connecting to the forge beyond. Angels sworn to the god have gathered to protect the aspect from the player characters.

Tactical Encounter: O. Angelic Defenders (see page 71).

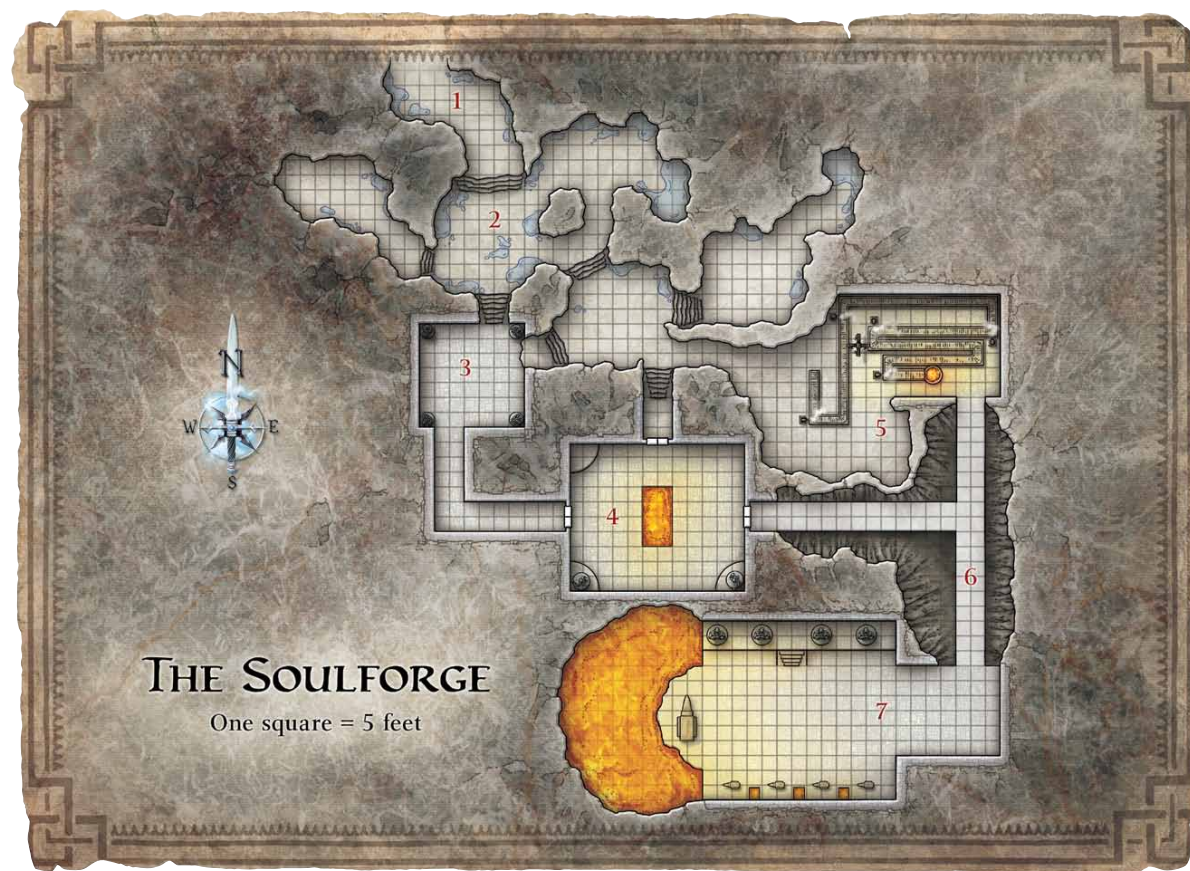
7. MORADIN'S FORGE

Moradin uses this chamber as a forge and entrusts the room to his aspect to protect. Under normal circumstances, the aspect of Moradin might be amenable to conversation, but the mithral dragon poisoned him against the characters so that he now believes that the adventures intend to stop Bahamut's rebirth.

Tactical Encounter: P. Moradin's Forge (see page 72).

WHAT NEXT?

If the characters came to Moradin's Forge first, clues should point them to the Halls of Reflection above Bahamut's Palace (see Part Two), where they might catch the mithral dragon before he moves on to the Bridge of al-Sihal. If the characters have already dealt with Dispater at the Halls of Reflection, the characters know that the mithral dragon is making for the Bridge and their only hope of stopping him is to catch him before he can cross it.



PART FOUR: THE BRIDGE OF AL-SIHAL

By now, the adventurers know who's behind the plot, what they must do to restore Bahamut, and where the final showdown will take place. The Bridge can be reached only by following the blinding path starting at the mithral gate in Asiryet, the Heavenly City, situated atop Chronias, the highest and mightiest mountain in the dominion. Dispat or the aspect of Moradin points the way for the characters, depending on the order in which the characters tackled the adventure sites.

Assuming the characters still have the *spelljammer*, they can make the final journey without trouble. Otherwise, the characters must use rituals or physically climb the mountains. Whatever means the characters use, let them reach the shining city before it's too late.

When the characters reach Asiryet, read:

A simple path winds around the magnificent mountain, climbing ever higher to the shining city surrounding its summit. A golden halo wreathes the city, underscoring its purity and holiness. A shining ornate gate forged from mithral grants access to a white stone bridge that extends from the mountain's peak into a shimmering curtain of golden light.

What happens next depends on the adventurers' circumstances.

AMYRIA IS PRESENT

Amyria awakens from her coma when the characters draw near the bridge. After a few moments, she says, "You have shouldered my burden for so long, but I must ask you to bear it further still." She points to the bridge. "There is my destiny. Do you have it?" She's talking about the creation spark. Assuming the characters do, she asks for it now, but this time in a deep, sonorous voice, the voice of Bahamut. "You have done very well. Help me to the bridge. There I believe this vessel will carry me across."

If the characters don't have the spark, Bahamut says, "There can be no return without Moradin's aid. Seek the creation spark from his forge behind Rainfather's Beard." With that, Amyria lapses back into unconsciousness once more.

Tactical Encounter: Q. War for Heaven (see page 76).

THE DRAGON HAS AMYRIA

Just as the characters close on the bridge, they see Dakranad making his way across, racing for the golden curtain at the far side.

Tactical Encounter: Q. War for Heaven (see page 76).



CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure ends with Dakranad's defeat and Amyria's passage through the golden curtain. How this comes about depends on the final encounter's outcome.

DAKRANAD WINS

If the mithral dragon carries Amyria and the creation spark through the golden curtain, he inadvertently achieves what the characters have been after all along: Bahamut's rebirth. Bahamut's essence uses Dakranad's body for fuel and does not need to destroy Amyria in the process. Moments after Dakranad disappears into the curtain, Amyria returns to the bridge, but she has little recollection of who she is or what she is doing there. It is as if she were reincarnated. Amyria doesn't figure into future adventures in the Scales of War campaign, but you can incorporate her if you wish or simply let her go her own way.

AMYRIA STEPS THROUGH ALONE

The deva struggles to her feet, groaning in pain, her body twisting and popping as Bahamut's essence struggles to break free. She takes the creation spark from the characters and turns toward the golden curtain. She pauses for a moment, looking back to the characters, tears spilling from her eyes. "My friends, there is nothing I can say or do to thank you for what you have done for Him. This is not the end. I shall return as I have many times before. Farewell for now and thank you." With that Amyria steps through the golden curtain.

AMYRIA DIES

If Amyria dies during the fight on the bridge, Bahamut's essence escapes her body and hovers in the air for a few minutes before dispersing. If the characters would see Bahamut restored, someone must shepherd the essence through the golden curtain with the creation spark. A character can do so by moving into the essence's space and breathing in the vapors. The character then feels compelled to enter the light. Stepping through destroys the valiant hero. Such a sacrifice is worthy of epics, and you should reward such a selfless act by granting the player's next character an extra 30th level magic item or a boon from Bahamut (see *Dungeon Master's Guide 2* for ideas).

BAHAMUT'S RETURN?

Regardless of who steps through, provided the conditions are met, Bahamut will return as described in the next installment of the Scales of War adventure path.

A. DRAGON STRIKE

Encounter Level 27 (55,000 XP)

SETUP

- 2 silver dragon scourgers (S)
- 4 angels of radiance (A)
- 6 Empyron attendants (T)
- Kalad (K)

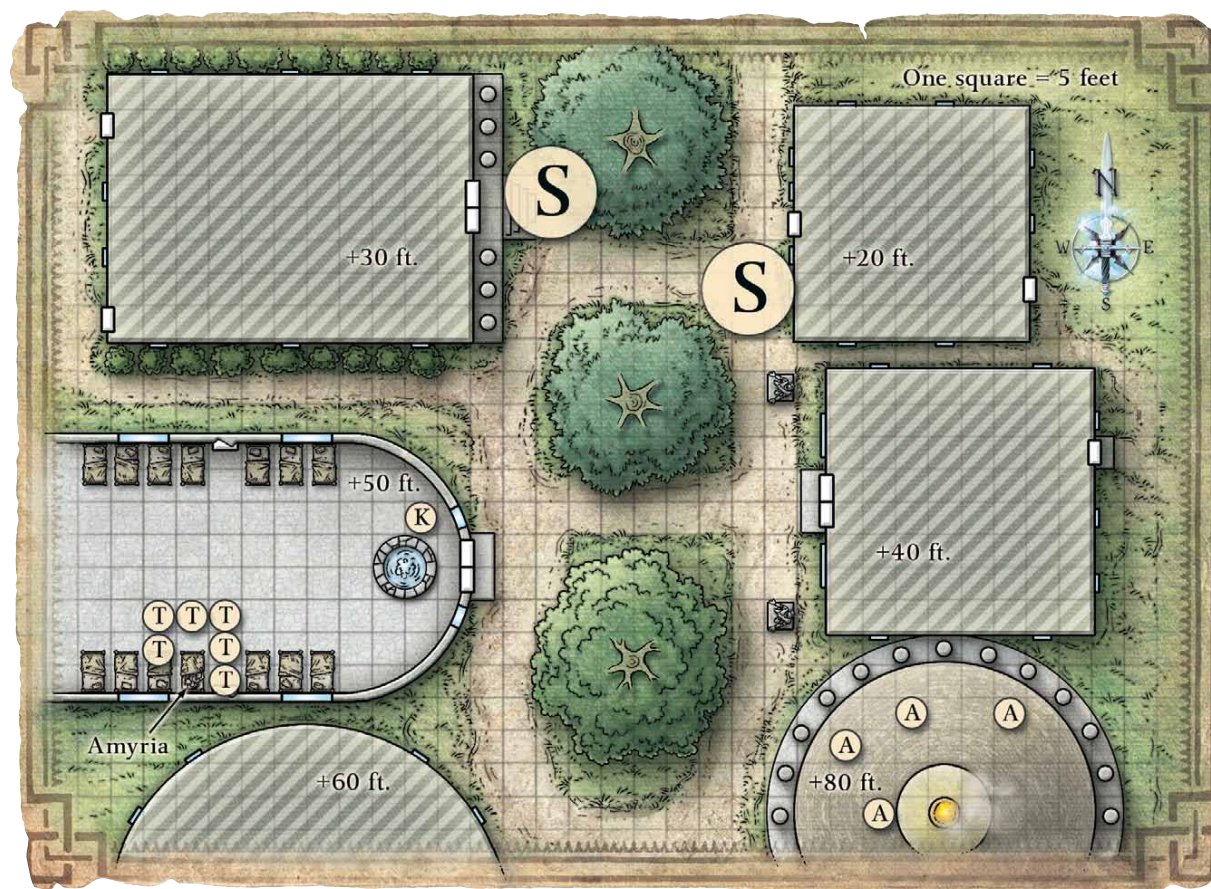
Dakranad dispatched two loyal silver dragons and four angels sworn to him in his capacity as Bahamut's steward to strike what he declared were imposters and threats to Celestia. The dragons roar and screech, hoping to lure the adventurers outside.

When the characters look outside, read:

Two mighty dragons descend from the blue skies, their silver scales glittering in the brilliant sun. They roar with rage as their long, sinuous tails sweep the air behind them.

Perception Check

DC 30: Perched atop a domed roof across the tree-lined road are four wispy warriors, each wielding a mighty greatsword. Featureless faces pick you out and the angelic warriors spring into the air.



TACTICS

The dragons work together and time their attacks for greatest effect. One dragon leads with *frightful presence* and the second hits the stunned targets with its *breath weapon*. On the following round, one uses *smashing tail* while the other strikes with *scourger's fury*.

Hiding in the building isn't much help. A dragon hunts fleeing adventurers, flying up to the roofs and smashing through them by triggering the collapsing

roof terrain power. Triggering the power lets the dragon look inside the building and blast the characters with its breath weapon or descend to maul them with its melee attacks.

The angels are more reluctant to enter combat, but if the characters emerge from Amyria's building, they engage the closest character.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Bright light.

Massive Trees: The trees grant cover to any creature standing in spaces adjacent to their trunks. Creatures standing under their canopies gain concealment from attacks originating overhead.

Other Buildings: The other buildings are empty, with no beds or patients inside. Doors to these buildings are unlocked unless the characters offended the attendants (see page 35), in which case they are sealed and require a DC 31 Strength check to open. See the tactical map for building heights.

Amyria's Building: This building looks like a tower, but the interior extends for many hundreds of feet. Beds line both walls and squares containing beds count as difficult terrain. If the characters hide inside this building, the dragons rip chunks out of the roof, triggering the *collapsing roof* terrain power.

Collapsing Roof

Single Use Terrain

Damage to the roof causes stones and timbers to fall inside and smash the interior where they land.

Single Use ♦ **Zone**

Standard Action **Area** burst 3

Check: Athletics check, DC 31

Effect: A burst 3 section of the ceiling falls and lands on the floor below the triggering creature.

Target: Each creature in the burst

Attack: +30 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d10 + 9 damage, the target is knocked prone, and immobilized and can't stand (save ends). Creatures immobilized by this attack gain superior cover until they save.

Miss: Half damage, and slide the target to the closest square outside the burst's edge.

Effect: The burst creates a zone of difficult terrain that lasts until cleared.

Statues and Pillars: Squares containing statues or pillars count as difficult terrain but grant cover to any creature in their spaces.

Amyria: The deva is unconscious where indicated on the map.

Temple Attendants: Six attendants other than Kalad position themselves around Amyria to protect her from harm. The attendants do not make attacks, but they give their lives to protect the deva.

2 Silver Dragon Scourgers (S) Level 27 Elite Brute

Huge natural magical beast (dragon) XP 22,000 each

Initiative +20 **Senses** Perception +20; darkvision

HP 612; **Bloodied** 306; see also *bloodied breath*

AC 39; **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 37

Resist 30 cold

Saving Throws +2

Speed 10, fly 10 (hover), overland flight 15

Action Points 1

⬇ **Bite** (standard; at-will)

Reach 2; +30 vs. AC; 4d8 + 9 damage.

⬇ **Claw** (standard; at-will)

Reach 2; +30 vs. AC; 2d8 + 9 damage.

↩ **Smashing Tail** (standard; at-will)

Close blast 3; one, two, or three enemies in blast; +28 vs. AC; 4d10 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

⬇ **Scourger's Fury** (standard; at-will)

The silver dragon scourger makes two claw attacks and one bite attack.

↩ **Breath Weapon** (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏ ⏏) ♦ **Cold**

Close blast 5; +26 vs. Reflex; 4d10 + 9 cold damage, and the target gains vulnerable 10 to all damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.

↩ **Bloodied Breath** (free, when first bloodied; encounter) ♦ **Cold**

Breath weapon recharges, and the silver dragon scourger uses it.

↩ **Frightful Presence** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Fear**

Close burst 10; targets enemies; +26 vs. Will; the target is stunned until the end of the silver dragon scourger's next turn. Aftereffect: The target takes a 2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).

Unstoppable

A silver dragon scourger makes saving throws against ongoing damage at the start of its turn as well as at the end of its turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common, Draconic

Skills Athletics +28, Insight +20

Str 31 (+23) **Dex** 25 (+20) **Wis** 14 (+15)

Con 26 (+21) **Int** 14 (+15) **Cha** 23 (+19)

4 Angels of Radiance (A) Level 27 Minion Skirmisher

Medium immortal humanoid (angel) XP 2,750 each

Initiative +22 **Senses** Perception +23**HP** 1; a missed attack never damages a minion; see also *radiant martyr***AC** 41; **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 39**Immune** fear; **Resist** 20 radiant**Speed** 8, fly 12 (hover)⚔ **Greatsword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+32 vs. AC; 14 damage.

⚡ **Radiant Martyr** (when the angel of radiance drops to 0 hit points) ♦ **Radiant**The angel of radiance explodes in a burst of brilliant light; close burst 10; targets enemies; +28 vs. Fortitude; the target is blinded until the end of its next turn. *Effect:* Angels in the burst gain 10 temporary hit points.**Alignment** Unaligned **Languages** Supernal**Str** 20 (+18) **Dex** 25 (+20) **Wis** 30 (+23)**Con** 25 (+20) **Int** 15 (+15) **Cha** 25 (+20)**Equipment** plate armor, greatsword**6 Empyron Attendants Level 27 Minion (Leader)**

Medium immortal humanoid XP 2,750 each

Initiative +21 **Senses** Perception +21**Healing Presence (Healing)** aura 1; allies in the aura regain 9 extra hit points whenever they regain hit points.**HP** 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.**AC** 41; **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 39**Immune** radiant**Speed** 6⚡ **Martyr's Shield** (when reduced to 0 hit points)

Close burst 3; allies in the burst gain a +2 bonus to all defenses until the end of their next turns.

Alignment Lawful good **Languages** Supernal**Skills** Heal +26**Str** 11 (+13) **Dex** 26 (+21) **Wis** 27 (+21)**Con** 26 (+21) **Int** 10 (+13) **Cha** 11 (+13)**Equipment** robes, mask

Kalad: Kalad joins the adventurers in fighting the dragons.

Kalad Level 24 Soldier

Medium natural humanoid, dwarf XP –

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +14; low-light vision**HP** 168; **Bloodied** 84; **Healing Surges** 11**AC** 41; **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 37**Immune** fear**Saving Throws** +5 against poison**Speed** 5⚔ **Warhammer** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+30 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Kalad's next turn.

⚔ **Valiant Strike** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Divine, Weapon**

+30 vs. AC, +1 per enemy adjacent to Kalad; 2d10 + 10 damage.

⚔ **Martyr's Smite** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Divine, Weapon**

+30 vs. AC; 4d10 + 15 damage. Until the end of Kalad's next turn, any time the target deals damage, Kalad can choose to take that damage. The target's intended victim takes no damage but is subject to any effects of the attack.

✈ **Angelic Rescue** (standard; daily) ♦ **Divine, Teleportation**

Ranged 20; targets one willing ally; the target teleports from any square Kalad can see to a square within 5 squares of Kalad that is nearer to Kalad than the target's original square.

Stand Your Ground

When an effect forces Kalad to move—through a pull, a push, or a slide—Kalad moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock Kalad prone, he can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.

Alignment Lawful good **Languages** Common, Dwarven, Supernal**Skills** Athletics +20, Dungeoneering +16, Endurance +16, Religion +17**Str** 16 (+15) **Dex** 13 (+13) **Wis** 14 (+14)**Con** 15 (+14) **Int** 10 (+12) **Cha** 13 (+13)**Equipment** robes, warhammer

B. FIERY ABDUCTION

Encounter Level 28 (66,000 XP)

SETUP

- 2 assassin devil abductors
- 4 brazen devil guards

Dispatser's servants come to steal Amyria away starting on round 4 of tactical encounter A.

If any characters have line of sight to Amyria when the devils appear, read:

The lights gutter out inside the healing hall and sounds of splintering wood and cracking stone echo from the darkness within.

TACTICS

The brazen devils attack the temple attendants and any characters who remain inside, while the assassin devils uses *shadow net* to ensnare and snatch Amyria. The assassin devils flee with Amyria while the brazen devils guard their retreat.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The hall's interior is now dark. If the dragons damaged the roof, bright light shines through any holes.

Ceiling: The ceiling rises 50 feet above the floor.

Beds: Squares with beds count as difficult terrain.

Fountain: Characters in squares adjacent to the fountain gain resist 3 to all damage. Any character drinking from the fountain regains the use of second wind. A character can benefit from the fountain in this way just once per day.

CONCLUSION

If the devils capture Amyria, they flee down the passage through which they entered to reach the open portal, which takes them to Bahamut's Palace (see Part Two). The devils automatically escape if the characters take a short rest after tactical encounter A or B.

2 Assassin Devil Abductors	Level 27 Lurker
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 11,000 each
Initiative +27	Senses Perception +26; darkvision
HP 186; Bloodied 93	
AC 41; Fortitude 37, Reflex 41, Will 39	
Resist 25 fire	
Speed 12	
⚔ Shadow Sword (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic, Weapon	
+30 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 6 necrotic damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
✴ Shadow Net (standard; recharges when the assassin devil uses shadow cloak) ♦ Necrotic	
Area burst 2 within 10; +29 vs. Reflex; the target is restrained, is weakened, and takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage (save ends all). While a target is affected by shadow net, the assassin devil cannot use its shadow cloak power.	
✈ Spirit Away (standard; encounter) ♦ Teleportation	
Ranged 10; one target restrained by shadow cloak; +29 vs. Will; the target teleports 10 squares.	
Dangerous Shadows	
An assassin devil's shadow sword attack deals 4d6 extra necrotic damage against any target granting combat advantage to it.	
Shadow Cloak (standard; recharges when no creatures are affected by shadow net) ♦ Illusion	
The assassin devil abductor is invisible until it hits or misses with an attack.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Supernal
Skills Stealth +28	
Str 22 (+19)	Dex 30 (+23) Wis 27 (+21)
Con 18 (+17)	Int 18 (+17) Cha 14 (+15)
Equipment leather armor, longsword	

4 Brazen Devil Guards	Level 27 Soldier
Large immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 11,000 each
Initiative +19	Senses Perception +25; darkvision
Cloying Hellfire (Fire) aura 2; a creature that starts its turn in the aura takes 10 fire damage. A creature without the devil keyword cannot use powers with the teleportation keyword while in the aura.	
HP 249; Bloodied 124	
AC 43; Fortitude 40, Reflex 37, Will 38	
Resist 30 fire	
Speed 7, fly 7 (clumsy)	
⚔ Trident (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Reach 2; +34 vs. AC; 2d12 + 8 damage, and the target slides 1 square.	
⚡ Disgorge Hellfire (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ Fire	
Close blast 5; +32 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 10 fire damage, and the target loses all resistances until the end of the brazen guard's next turn.	
⚡ Furious Assault (standard; encounter) ♦ Teleportation, Weapon	
Reach 2; +32 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 8 damage, the target is pushed 3 squares, and the brazen devil guard teleports to a space adjacent to the target at the end of the push.	
⚡ Fiendish Opportunist (immediate reaction, when an enemy is pushed, pulled, or slid into a square adjacent to the brazen devil; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+32 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 5 damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
Infernal Assault (move; encounter) ♦ Teleportation	
The brazen devil guard teleports 20 squares and gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls until the start of its next turn. The brazen devil guard can teleport into occupied squares, sliding any creatures occupying those squares into the nearest unoccupied squares.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Supernal
Skills Intimidate +24	
Str 28 (+22)	Dex 18 (+17) Wis 25 (+20)
Con 25 (+20)	Int 23 (+19) Cha 22 (+19)
Equipment hellforged plate armor (destroyed if brazen devil is reduced to 0 hit points), trident	

C. TRACKING THE DEVILS

Encounter Level 16 (7,000 XP)

What seems like a simple tower from the outside is in fact a much larger, sprawling maze of rooms, stairs, and passages. Without a guide, one can become lost among the hospital beds and sterile rooms as there are few landmarks or signposts to orient an explorer. The fleeing devils left signs to help navigate their way back to the portal through which they emerged from the Platinum Dragon's stronghold. Alert and careful adventurers can reach the portal before the devils escape and gain an edge against the infernal trap waiting for them.

Level: 25 (XP 7,000)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: This is a staged skill challenge. Each stage sees the characters moving through different parts of the Healing Hall and using different primary skills to move on to the next part.

ENTIRE CHALLENGE

These skills can be used at any point during the challenge.

Secondary Skills: Insight, Perception, special.

Insight (DC 31): A character can make an Insight check at any point during the skill challenge to remove 1 failure. This skill provides no successes.

Perception (DC 31): During each stage, a character can make a Perception check to locate signs left by the fleeing devils. A success grants a +2 bonus to skill checks made during that stage. This skill provides no successes.

Special: If an Empyron attendant survived and accompanies the adventurers, the player characters gain a +2 bonus to all checks related to this skill challenge.

STAGE 1: PASSAGES

Twisting and turning passages create a challenging maze.

Primary Skill: Dungeoneering

Dungeoneering (DC 26): The first successful check earns the characters 1 success as the adventurers navigate the passages and pick up the devils' trail. A failed check counts as a failure as the characters become lost. A second Dungeoneering or Perception check earns no additional success or failure but is necessary to allow the characters to proceed to Stage 2. This skill can provide a maximum of 1 success.

STAGE 2: CHAMBER OF DOORS

Beyond the passages, the adventurers come to a massive chamber with one hundred doors scattered across the walls, floor, and ceiling. Inspecting any door reveals each door is locked.

Primary Skills: Arcana, Thievery

Arcana (DC 22): The character discerns Arcane Lock wards in the middle of the room, on the floor, or on each door except the one the characters enter. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.



Thievery (DC 31): The character picks the lock on a door. A successful or failed Thievery checks counts as a failure for the challenge. Eventually, the characters will locate the open door.

STAGE 3: MOUNTING STAIRS

Beyond the unlocked door is a steep, winding staircase. If the characters would catch the devils, they must rush up the stairs.

Primary Skills: Athletics

Athletics (DC 17): The party must make a group Athletics check. If the party gets three or more successful checks, they earn one success and reach the top of the stairs. If the party doesn't get at least three successes, the "out of shape" adventurers slow the party down, but the group still reaches the top of the stairs. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

STAGE 4: SHADOWY PASSAGE

The stairs open onto a shadowy passage, corrupted by the devils' presence. A pit fiend and its cronies prepare an ambush for the characters, but the characters can sneak up on them and ruin the ambush.

Primary Skills: Stealth

Stealth (DC 33): The party must make a group Stealth check. If the party gets three or more successful checks, they earn one success and foil the devils' ambush. If the party doesn't get at least three successes, they may still foil the devils' ambush, but they may also face stiffer opposition. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

ENDING THE CHALLENGE

Success: The characters find the portal and are not surprised by the ambush. If the characters received no failures during the skill challenge, they gain surprise against the enemies in tactical encounter D.

Failure: Each time the characters get a failure on a skill check, add two more legion devil militants to tactical encounter D. If the characters fail the skill challenge overall, they still find the portal but they are surprised by the devils in tactical encounter D and the devils have reinforcements as noted above.

D. COVERED RETREAT

Encounter Level 26 (46,100 XP)

SETUP

- 1 pit fiend (P)
- 1 war devil maunder (W)
- 2 cambion hell thralls (C)
- 4 legion devil militants (L)

If the characters won a victory in tactical encounter C, the devils do not have surprise. Be sure to add



reinforcements based on how the characters acquitted themselves during the Tracking the Devils skill challenge.

When the characters enter the room, read:

A veritable infernal army defends the strange platform commanding the chamber's far side. Sinister red light wells up from a pit in the center illuminating a devil with scaly hide and a pair of cambions. Before the platform stands a hulking horned devil and armored, human-like devils armed with longswords. White tiles cover the floor, walls, and ceiling throughout the chamber.

Pit Fiend (P) Level 26 Elite Soldier (Leader)

Large immortal humanoid (devil) XP 18,000

Initiative +22 **Senses** Perception +23; darkvision
Aura of Fear (Fear) aura 5; enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack rolls.

Aura of Fire (Fire) aura 5; enemies that enter or start their turns in the aura take 15 fire damage.

HP 486; **Bloodied** 243

AC 44; **Fortitude** 42, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 40

Resist 30 fire, 15 poison

Saving Throws +2

Speed 12, fly 12 (clumsy), teleport 10

Action Points 1

⚔ Flametouched Mace (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Weapon

Reach 2; +33 vs. AC; 2d10 + 11 fire damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).

⚔ Tail Sting (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison

Reach 2; +33 vs. AC; 1d6 + 11 damage, and the pit fiend makes a secondary attack against the same target. **Secondary Attack:** +29 vs. Fortitude; the target takes ongoing 15 poison damage and is weakened (save ends both).

⚔ Pit Fiend Frenzy (standard; at-will)

The pit fiend makes a *flametouched mace* attack and a *tail sting* attack.

✈ Point of Terror (minor; at-will) ♦ Fear

Ranged 5; +30 vs. Will; the target takes a -5 penalty to all defenses until the end of the pit fiend's next turn.

If the characters did not take a short rest after encounters A or B, read:

A bronze-armored devil carries Amyria down the stairs into the shining depression, as one shadowy fiend casts a smile and a look your way before they both vanish into the light.

TACTICS

The devils' aim is to prevent the characters from moving through the portal.

Pit Fiend: The pit fiend begins by using *infernal summons* to add reinforcements to the legion devils, and spends its remaining actions using *point of terror* and *irresistible command*. The pit fiend orchestrates the battle, staying back and blowing up his minions

✈ Irresistible Command (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ Charm, Fire

Ranged 10; targets one devil of a lower level than the pit fiend; the target slides 5 squares and explodes, dealing 2d10 + 5 fire damage to all creatures in a close burst 2. The exploding devil is destroyed.

Infernal Summons (standard; encounter)

The pit fiend summons a group of devil allies. Summoned devils roll initiative to determine when they act in the initiative order and gain a +4 bonus to attack rolls as long as the pit fiend is alive. They remain until killed, dismissed by the pit fiend (free action), or the encounter ends. Characters do not earn experience points for killing these summoned creatures. The pit fiend chooses to summon one of the following groups of devils:

- ♦ 8 legion devil legionnaires (level 21), or
- ♦ 2 war devils (level 22), or
- ♦ 1 war devil (level 22) and 4 legion devil legionnaires (level 21)

Tactical Teleport (standard; recharge ⚡ ⚡ ⚡) ♦ Teleportation

The pit fiend can teleport up to 2 allies within 10 squares of it. The targets appear in any unoccupied squares within 10 squares of the pit fiend.

Alignment Evil

Languages Supernal

Skills Bluff +27, Insight +23, Intimidate +27, Religion +24

Str 32 (+24)

Dex 24 (+20)

Wis 20 (+18)

Con 27 (+21)

Int 22 (+19)

Cha 28 (+22)

Equipment flametouched mace, noble signet ring

to wipe out the adventurers, teleporting allies where they can be of the most use, and shredding the characters' defenses until he's engaged, at which point he responds with melee attacks.

War Devil Mauler: The war devil uses *fiendish pursuit* to land in the characters' midst and keep them tied down while the legion devils move into position, using *claw* and *hurl* to scatter defenders and *crackling trident* to destroy strikers.

Cambion Hell Thralls: The cambions avoid melee and remain on the platform as long as possible. One leads with *plague of hellfire* while the other uses *soulburn*. Once the characters have saved against *plague of hellfire*, the other cambion repeats the attack.

Legion Devil Militants: These devils work in teams to keep their defenses high, while worrying anyone they can reach with their attacks.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: The portal sheds dim light in an 8 square radius.

Ceiling: The ceiling here is 30 feet high.

Platform: A 15-foot tall platform commands the far side of the room. The floor sinks to a depression at the platform's center, first to a landing 15 feet below the top of the platform, which makes it even with the rest of the floor, and then to another landing 15 feet below the last. A character can climb the platform with a DC 17 Athletics check.

Stairs: All squares containing stairs are difficult terrain.

Portal: A shimmering red portal, this gateway connects to area 1 in Bahamut's Palace (see page 39).

Treasure: The pit fiend has treasure parcels A and B.

War Devil Mauler (W)	Level 25 Soldier
Large immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 7,000
Initiative +21 Senses Perception +17; darkvision	
HP 235; Bloodied 117	
AC 42; Fortitude 39, Reflex 37, Will 35	
Resist fire 30	
Speed 8, fly 8 (clumsy)	
Ⓢ Claw (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +30 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 9 damage, and the target is grabbed.	
Ⓢ Crackling Trident (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Reach 2; +32 vs. AC; 4d6 + 4 damage plus ongoing 5 lightning damage.	
✈ Hurl (minor; at-will)	
The war devil mauler throws a Medium or smaller target it is grabbing: the grab ends and the war devil mauler slides the target 8 squares. The war devil makes an attack against the slid target and one creature adjacent to the target at the end of the slide: +30 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 9 damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
Fiendish Pursuit (move; recharges when the war devil mauler uses <i>hurl</i>)	
The war devil mauler flies 8 squares and lands at the end of this movement. All creatures adjacent to the war devil mauler are marked until the end of its next turn.	
Alignment Evil Languages Supernal	
Skills Intimidate +22	
Str 29 (+21)	Dex 25 (+19) Wis 21 (+17)
Con 27 (+20)	Int 17 (+15) Cha 20 (+17)
Equipment trident	

2 Cambion Hell Thralls (C)	Level 24 Controller
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 6,050
Initiative +18 Senses Perception +17; darkvision	
HP 220; Bloodied 110; see also <i>plague of hellfire</i>	
AC 38; Fortitude 34, Reflex 36, Will 38	
Resist 20 fire	
Speed 6, fly 8 (clumsy)	
Ⓢ Hellfire Blade (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Weapon	
+26 vs. AC; 4d6 + 3 damage, and the target gains vulnerability 5 fire until the end of the cambion's next turn.	
✈ Soulburn (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Psychic	
Ranged 20; +28 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 9 fire and psychic damage, and ongoing 10 fire and psychic damage (save ends).	
✈ Tortured Soul (immediate reaction, when a target fails a saving throw to end the ongoing damage from soulburn; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
Ranged 20; +28 vs. Will; the target is dazed until the end of the cambion's next turn. <i>Effect:</i> The target slides 3 squares.	
✖ Plague of Hellfire (standard; recharges when the cambion is first bloodied) ♦ Fire, Psychic	
Area burst 1 within 10; targets enemies; +28 vs. Reflex; 4d8 + 8 fire and psychic damage, the target takes ongoing 10 fire damage and the target is held immobilized 6 squares (30 feet) above the battlefield (save ends both). <i>Aftereffect:</i> The target falls and takes normal falling damage.	
Alignment Evil Languages Common, Supernal	
Skills Arcana +24, Bluff +26	
Str 17 (+15)	Dex 22 (+18) Wis 21 (+17)
Con 20 (+17)	Int 24 (+19) Cha 29 (+21)
Equipment robes, dagger	

4 Legion Devil Militants (L) Level 26 Minion Soldier

Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 2,250

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +14; darkvision**HP** 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.**AC** 42; **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 37**Resist** 20 fire**Speed** 7, teleport 3⬇ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+34 vs. AC; 14 damage.

Squad Defense

The legion devil militant gains a +2 bonus to all defenses when adjacent to at least one other legion devil.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal**Str** 14 (+15) **Dex** 12 (+14) **Wis** 12 (+14)**Con** 14 (+15) **Int** 10 (+13) **Cha** 12 (+14)**Equipment** plate armor, heavy shield, longsword**Summoned Legion Devil
Legionnaire**

Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP –

Initiative +11 **Senses** Perception +11; darkvision**HP** 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.**AC** 37; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 32; see also *squad defense***Resist** 15 fire**Speed** 7, teleport 3⬇ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+30 vs. AC (+26 vs. AC if pit fiend is killed); 8 damage.

Squad Defense

The legion devil legionnaire gains a +2 bonus to its defenses when adjacent to at least one other legion devil.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal**Str** 14 (+12) **Dex** 12 (+11) **Wis** 12 (+11)**Con** 14 (+12) **Int** 10 (+10) **Cha** 12 (+11)**Equipment** plate armor, heavy shield, longsword**Summoned War Devil Level 22 Brute (Leader)**

Large immortal humanoid (devil) XP –

Initiative +17 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision**HP** 255; **Bloodied** 127**AC** 35; **Fortitude** 34, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 30**Resist** 30 fire**Speed** 8, fly 8 (clumsy)⬇ **Claw** (standard; at-will)

+30 vs. AC (+26 vs. AC if pit fiend is killed); 1d6 + 8 damage.

⬇ **Trident** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

Reach 2; +30 vs. AC (+26 vs. AC if pit fiend is killed); 4d4 + 8 damage, ongoing 5 damage (save ends), and the target slides into any square adjacent to the war devil and is knocked prone.

✈ **Besieged Foe** (minor; at-will)

Ranged sight; automatic hit; the target is marked, and allies of the war devil gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls made against the target until the encounter ends or the war devil marks a new target.

✈ **Devilish Transposition** (move; at-will) ♦ **Teleportation**

Ranged 20; the war devil and an allied devil within range swap positions.

✈ **Fiendish Tactics** (minor; recharge ⏏ ⏏)

Ranged 10; affects up to 2 allied devils of the war devil's level or lower; each target can take a move action or make a basic attack.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal**Skills** Intimidate +20**Str** 27 (+19) **Dex** 23 (+17) **Wis** 19 (+15)**Con** 25 (+18) **Int** 15 (+13) **Cha** 18 (+15)**Equipment** trident

E. HELL'S FURY

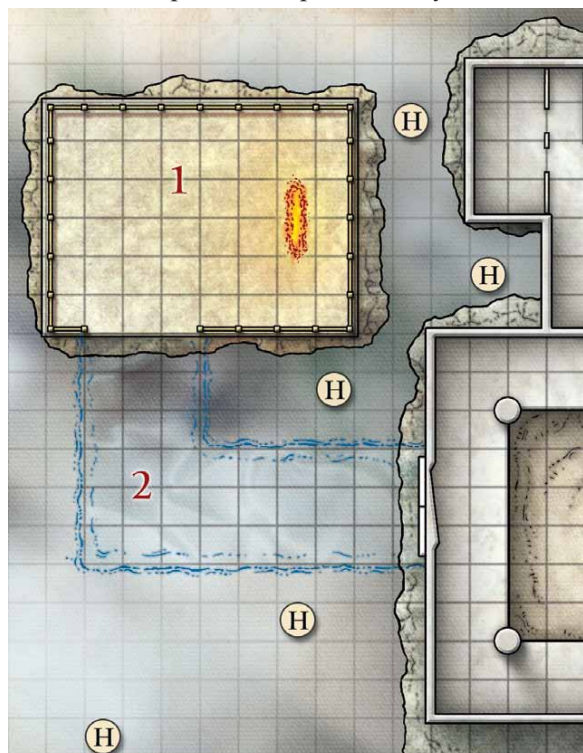
Encounter Level 25 (35,000 XP)

SETUP

5 Hell's furies (H)

Dispat set his consorts with an important task. These beautiful and terrible devils are to watch over the portal to ensure no unwelcome visitors arrive to disturb Dispat's searching. The furies have watched the portal since the kidnappers arrived and now perch on the roofs, monitoring as commanded. The furies do not like one another and hurl vicious insults at each other to pass the time.

The tactical map assumes the characters enter through the portal. If the characters arrive by some other means, expand the map as necessary. The furies



may be charged with watching the shining gate, but they also recognize the danger posed by an approaching spelljammer. The howling winds cover any sounds of combat.

When the characters step through the portal, read:

The portal deposits you on a platform suspended in the sky. Behind you, tall buildings constructed from white stone glitter in the bright light. Double doors some thirty feet away across an empty gulf grant access to the larger building.

When the characters see a fury, read:

Black-feathered angelic wings hold a pale, beautiful woman in the air. The wind whips her long black hair about her face, but even through the unruly strands you can see her gleaming red eyes and curling smile. She raises a longbow and nocks an arrow, causing it to ignite with unruly fire.

Perception Check

DC 31: *Light bends around a 15-foot wide area extending out from the platform on which you stand.*

TACTICS

The Hell's furies avoid melee, staying back far enough that they can pepper the characters with *longbow* attacks. During the first round, each fury targets a different character with *iron thorn*. Once they pin down their enemies, they use *strafing shot* to keep moving and out of their enemies' reach.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Force Bridge: An invisible bridge (area 2) made from force spans the gap. The bridge is impervious to damage.

Portal: The portal connects to the Hall of Healing described in Part One (page 35). The portal provides concealment against ranged attacks.

Gusting Wind: Brutal winds scream and shriek as they blow across the outcropping. Each round, roll 1d6. On a 6, a gust of wind makes an attack.

A Gusting Wind

The moaning winds gather strength as they howl around you.

Standard Action

Area burst battlefield

Target: Each creature in the burst

Attack: +28 vs. Fortitude, +2 against flying creatures

Hit: The target is pushed 1d6 squares toward area 3.

5 Hell's Furies

Level 25 Artillery

Medium immortal humanoid (devil)

XP 7,000 each

Initiative +21

Senses Perception +20; darkvision

HP 176; **Bloodied** 88

AC 39 (41 while flying); **Fortitude** 37, **Reflex** 39 (41 while flying), **Will** 36; see also *deft flier*

Resist 20 fire

Speed 6, fly 8 (hover); see also *feathery escape*

⬇ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ⬆ **Weapon**

+20 vs. AC; 3d8 + 7 damage.

⬇ **Longbow** (standard; at-will) ⬆ **Fire, Weapon**

Ranged 20/40; +32 vs. AC; 2d10 + 9 damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends). If this attack hits a creature already suffering from ongoing fire damage, this attack instead deals 1d10 extra fire damage.

✈ **Strafing Shot** (standard; recharges when the Hell's fury misses with a longbow attack) ⬆ **Fire, Weapon**

The Hell's fury flies its fly speed and makes two *longbow* attacks against two different targets at any point during this movement.

✈ **Iron Thorn** (standard; encounter)

Ranged 5; +30 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 9 damage, and an iron thorn appears in an unoccupied space adjacent to the target. The target cannot move more than 3 squares from the iron thorn and grants combat advantage to all attackers (save ends).

⬅ **Feathery Escape** (immediate reaction, when bloodied by an attack; encounter) ⬆ **Fire, Teleportation**

The Hell's fury disappears in a cloud of fiery feathers: close burst 1; +28 vs. Reflex; 4d10+8 fire damage. Effect: The Hell's fury teleports 10 squares.

Alignment Evil

Languages Supernal

Str 25 (+19)

Dex 28 (+21)

Wis 17 (+15)

Con 20 (+17)

Int 14 (+14)

Cha 22 (+18)

Equipment leather armor, longsword, longbow, quiver of 30 arrows

F. DEVOTED GUARDIANS

Encounter Level 26 (46,500 XP)

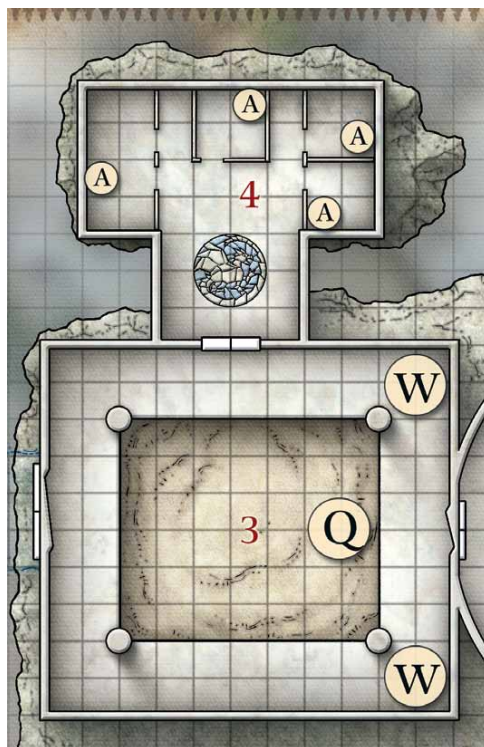
SETUP

Quoriel (Q)

2 guardian wyverns (W)

4 angels of warding (A)

Quoriel is charged with guarding the entrance to the Halls of Reflection and has served the Platinum Dragon for a thousand years. During this time, the angel's loyalty was without question. Bahamut's death shook Quoriel's resolve and made it possible for Dispat to twist him to his service. Quoriel is confused



and paranoid; he despises Tiamat as much as ever, but now sees Tiamat's servants in anyone who comes to call, including the player characters. The angels of warding, sequestered in their meditation chambers, follow Quoriel's lead.

When the characters enter the Canary Courtyard, read:

An open courtyard stretches before you. A twelve-foot-tall angelic being stands before the door, gripping a blackened quarterstaff in his hands. White sand covers the floor, and unsettling images appear drawn in the dust: pentagrams, queer beasts, and worse. A promenade encircles the courtyard above, held aloft by wooden pillars with canaries carved in their surfaces. The angel's ghostly features darken as its white eyes blaze and it challenges the intruders: "Despoilers, you dare enter Bahamut's sacred halls?"

When the characters see the guardian wyverns, read:

A winged, dragonlike creature drops from the balcony. Its long tail, equipped with a stinger, slashes the air around it.

Perception Check

DC 19: *You hear a creaking noise coming from the balcony above.*

TACTICS

The angel is not up for conversation and attacks immediately. When Quoriel attacks, the guardian wyverns above join in during the first round, followed by the angels of warding at the start of round three.

Quoriel: The archangel leads with *overwhelming presence* and then spends an action point to use *lightning bolt* against one enemy he stunned. Quoriel then flies up 5 squares and hovers. Each round thereafter,

Quoriel hammers the characters with *lightning bolt* and *majestic rally* when the angels of warding join the fight.

Guardian Wyverns: The wyverns take to the air as well, flying to get above the adventurers and then blast them with *purifying breath*. While waiting for their attack to recharge, they use *flyby attack* unless bothered by a mobile character, at which point the wyvern descends to nail the troublesome enemy with a virulent sting.

Angels of Warding: When the angels of warding show up, they burst through the double doors above and leap down from the balcony (making Acrobatics checks) to take the fight to the characters. Each angel squares off against a different enemy, using *hewing slash* if it is blinded, but otherwise relying on *fullblades* to get the job done.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Balcony: The balcony is 20 feet above the floor. No stairs or ladder grants access, though a character could climb a supporting pillar (DC 17 Athletics check). The balcony blocks line of sight for characters underneath it.

Doors: The doors at the map's top along with the doors to the bottom are made from iron and are accessed from the floor. They bear Bahamut's likeness carved in bas-relief on their surfaces. The carvings clutch the rings to open the doors in their hands. The double doors on the left side can be accessed only by the balcony. They are made from ash wood and bear carvings similar to those on the iron doors below.

Draconic Carving: In area 4, a carving captures Bahamut's likeness in the wood. Evil and chaotic evil creatures take 15 radiant damage upon entering the carving's squares.

Quoriel	Level 24 Elite Controller (Leader)
Large immortal humanoid (angel)	XP 12,100
Initiative +18	Senses Perception +19
HP 438; Bloodied 219	
AC 40 (38 when bloodied); Fortitude 34, Reflex 36, Will 38	
Immune fear; Resist 15 radiant	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 8, fly 12 (hover)	
Action Point 1	
⊕ Quarterstaff (standard; at-will) ♦ Radiant, Weapon	
Reach 2; +29 vs. AC; 2d8 + 11 damage.	
↗ Lightning Bolt (standard; at-will) ♦ Lightning	
Ranged 10; +28 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 9 lightning damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Quoriel's next turn.	
⬇ Avenging Strike (when an ally within 5 squares of Quoriel is reduced to 0 hit points; at-will)	
Quoriel shifts 2 squares and makes a melee basic attack as a free action.	
⚡ Majestic Rally (standard; recharge ☞ ☞) ♦ Radiant, Thunder	
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +28 vs. Will; 2d10 + 8 radiant damage plus 2d10 thunder damage, and the target is weakened (save ends). <i>Miss:</i> Half damage. <i>Effect:</i> Any angel within the burst gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls until the end of Quoriel's next turn.	
⚡ Overwhelming Presence (standard; encounter) ♦ Radiant	
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +28 vs. Will; 5d8 + 8 radiant damage, and the target is stunned until the end of Quoriel's next turn.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Supernal
Skills Insight +24, Religion +24	
Str 21 (+17)	Dex 22 (+18) Wis 25 (+19)
Con 19 (+16)	Int 25 (+19) Cha 28 (+21)
Equipment plate armor, quarterstaff	

2 Guardian Wyverns (W)	Level 25 Skirmisher
Large immortal beast (reptile)	XP 7,000 each
Initiative +21	Senses Perception +22; low-light vision
HP 234; Bloodied 117	
AC 39; Fortitude 39, Reflex 37, Will 35	
Resist 15 radiant	
Speed 8, fly 12 (hover); see also <i>flyby attack</i>	
⊕ Bite (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +30 vs. AC; 2d12 + 7 damage.	
⊕ Claws (standard; at-will)	
The guardian wyvern can attack with its claws only while flying; +30 vs. AC; 2d10 + 9 damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
⬇ Virulent Sting (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison, Psychic	
Reach 2; +30 vs. AC; 2d10 + 9 damage, and the guardian wyvern makes a secondary attack against the same target. <i>Secondary Attack:</i> +28 vs. Fortitude; the target is immobilized and weakened (save ends both).	
⬇ Flyby Attack (standard; at-will)	
The guardian wyvern flies up to 12 squares and makes one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. The guardian wyvern doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of the attack.	
⚡ Purifying Breath (standard; recharge ☞ ☞) ♦ Fire, Radiant	
Close blast 5; +27 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 9 fire and radiant damage, and the target is blinded and takes ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends both).	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages —
Str 28 (+21)	Dex 25 (+19) Wis 20 (+17)
Con 26 (+20)	Int 2 (+8) Cha 8 (+11)

4 Angels of Warding (A)	Level 23 Soldier
Medium immortal humanoid (angel)	XP 5,100 each
Initiative +18	Senses Perception +17
HP 210; Bloodied 105	
AC 38; Fortitude 35, Reflex 34, Will 35	
Immune fear; Resist 15 radiant	
Speed 6	
⊕ Fullblade (standard; at-will) ♦ Radiant, Weapon	
+30 vs. AC; 2d12 + 7 damage (crit 6d12 + 31), and the target is marked until the end of the angel of warding's next turn.	
⬇ Holy Ban (minor; recharges when the angel of warding hits with a fullblade attack)	
Targets a creature the angel of warding has marked; the target can only spend move actions to move, and not shift, away from the angel of warding (save ends).	
⚡ Hewing Slash (standard; requires fullblade; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Close burst 1; one creature; +30 vs. AC; 2d12 + 7 damage, and the angel of warding can repeat the attack against another creature in the burst.	
⬇ Righteous Retaliation (immediate reaction, when an enemy the angel of warding has marked ends its turn in a square not adjacent to an angel of warding; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ Teleportation, Weapon	
The angel of warding teleports to a square adjacent to the triggering enemy, makes a basic attack, and teleports to the square it vacated.	
Angelic Presence (while not bloodied)	
Any attack against an angel of warding takes a -2 penalty to the attack roll.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Supernal
Skills Acrobatics +21, Insight +22, Intimidate +19	
Str 23 (+17)	Dex 20 (+16) Wis 22 (+17)
Con 18 (+15)	Int 11 (+11) Cha 16 (+14)
Equipment plate armor, fullblade	

G. BAHAMUT'S THRONE

Encounter Level 26 (45,000 XP)

SETUP

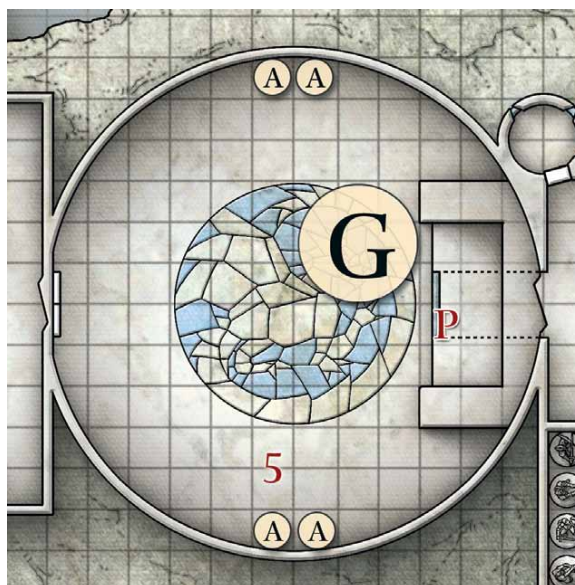
- 1 godforged colossus (G)
- 1 platinum seal (P)
- 4 angels of great valor (A)

A powerful guardian blocks further passage into the Halls of Reflection.

When the characters enter this room, read:

A massive throne on the side opposite the entrance holds a twenty-foot-tall alabaster statue of a powerful dragonborn warrior. Its stony hand rests on the sword lying across its lap. At the throne's base, between the statue's legs, is a platinum disk engraved with a dragon's likeness. Light shining through windows piercing the dome illuminates four flying angels.

The construct remains inert until the characters attack any angel or they come within 5 squares of the platinum seal. When the characters meet either condition, the construct animates and attacks.



TACTICS

The angels distract the characters and sweep down from above to attack with greatswords. The colossus uses *voice of the demiurge* and then *force missiles* against characters reluctant to close. It uses *force weapon* against those who do close.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Ceiling: The ceiling is 30 feet high.

Treasure: Piled on the throne's arms are parcels C, D, and E.

Godforged Colossus (G)	Level 29 Elite Brute	
Huge immortal animate (construct)	XP 30,000	
Initiative +19	Senses Perception +26	
Reverberating Presence (Psychic) aura 5; an enemy that starts its turn in the aura takes 20 psychic damage.		
HP 662; Bloodied 331		
AC 43; Fortitude 48, Reflex 40, Will 45		
Immune disease, fear, poison, sleep; Resist 30 force, 30 psychic		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed 10		
Action Points 1		
⚔ Force Weapon (standard; at-will) ♦ Force, Psychic, Weapon		
Reach 3; +32 vs. AC; 4d12 + 5 force damage, and the colossus makes a secondary attack against the same target. Secondary Attack: +25 vs. Will; 3d6 psychic damage, and the target is stunned until the end of the godforged colossus's next turn.		
⚡ Defensive Strike (immediate reaction, when an enemy moves adjacent to the godforged colossus; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Psychic		
+32 vs. AC; 4d12 + 15 damage plus 3d6 psychic damage, and the colossus makes a secondary attack against the same target. Secondary Attack: +30 vs. Fortitude; the target is pushed 5 squares, knocked prone, and dazed (save ends).		
🏹 Force Missile (standard; at-will) ♦ Force		
Ranged 20; +30 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 3 force damage, and the target is pushed 5 squares.		
🗨 Voice of the Demiurge (standard; encounter) ♦ Psychic		
Close burst 10; targets enemies; +26 vs. Will; 3d8 + 11 psychic damage, and the target is stunned until the end of the godforged colossus's next turn.		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages –	
Str 40 (+29)	Dex 21 (+19)	Wis 34 (+26)
Con 31 (+24)	Int 4 (+11)	Cha 17 (+17)

Platinum Seal (P)

Trap

Level 25 Warder

XP 7,000

A shining platinum disk, ten feet in diameter, stands in the center of a marble surface.

Trap: A massive platinum disk bars passage through the portal in the mighty throne's base.

Perception

No check is necessary to notice the platinum seal.

Additional Skill: Arcana, Religion

- ◆ **DC 26:** The character identifies the platinum seal's dangers.
- ◆ **DC 31:** The character gains a +2 bonus to checks made to disable the trap.

Trigger

When a creature enters or starts its turn in a square within 5 squares of the platinum seal, the trap attacks.

Attack ◆ Psychic, Radiant

Opportunity Action Close burst 5

Target: The triggering creature

Attack: +28 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d6 + 9 psychic and radiant damage, and the target teleports to a space adjacent to the godforged colossus.

Miss: Half damage.

Countermeasures

- ◆ Destroying the godforged colossus also disables the trap.
- ◆ A character adjacent to the platinum seal can engage in a skill challenge to disable the trap and unlock the door. DC 26 Arcana or Religion, or DC 31 Thievery. Complexity 1 (4 successes before 3 failures). Success disables the trap. Failure cause the platinum seal to make an attack against each creature in a close burst 5: +28 vs. Fortitude; 4d8 + 9 psychic and radiant damage, and the target is stunned until the end of its next turn.

4 Angels of Great Valor (A) Level 25 Minion Skirmisher

Medium immortal humanoid (angel)

XP 1,750 each

Initiative +18 **Senses Perception** +14

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion

AC 39; **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 34, **Will** 33

Immune fear; **Resist** 15 fire, 15 radiant

Speed 6, fly 9 (hover)

⊕ **Greatsword** (standard; at-will) ◆ **Fire, Weapon**

+30 vs. AC; 14 fire damage.

Alignment Unaligned

Languages Supernal

Str 28 (+21)

Dex 18 (+16)

Wis 14 (+14)

Con 18 (+16)

Int 12 (+13)

Cha 16 (+15)

Equipment chainmail, greatsword

H. NO SANCTUARY

Encounter Level 26 (45,000 XP)

SETUP

Eye of Bahamut (E)

Bahamut's most private sanctum stands below a dangerous trap. An enormous statue made from solid platinum comes to life when anyone other than an individual permitted by Bahamut comes too close. Dispater used his servants to lure the statue into the hall and once past, he and his cronies slipped behind it to enter Bahamut's sanctum. After the statue dispatched Dispater's servants, it moved back to its normal position, thus trapping the archdevil and his servants inside the now impregnable vault.

When the characters can see into room 10, read:

A platinum dragon, or at least a statue, stands on a pedestal in a cramped room's center. It stands nearly twenty-five feet tall, wings outstretched and eyes glittering in the soft white light.

Perception Check

DC 26: A burned and severed hand lies on the floor near the statue's base.

TACTICS

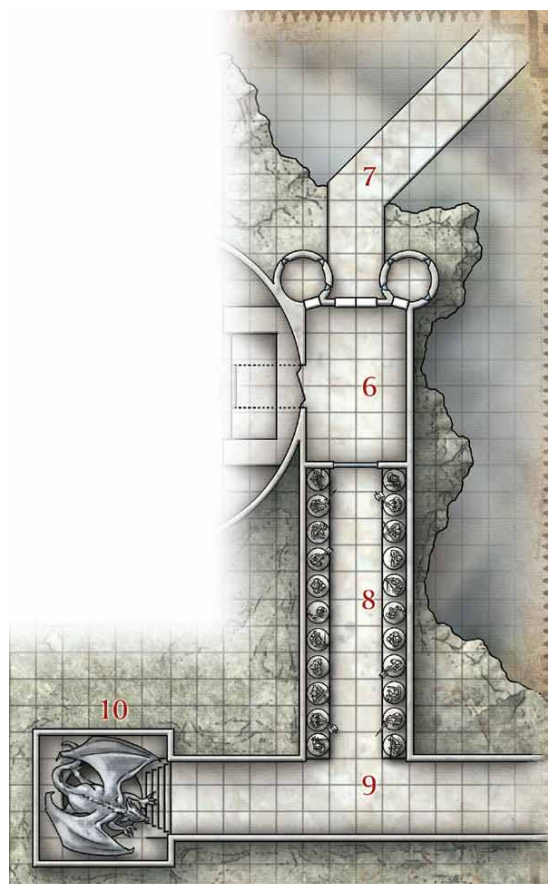
The trap is mindless and responds as it was designed. Once triggered, the trap blasts the characters but doesn't move from its position unless there are no creatures it can hit with the blast. Should this happen, the trap advances on the characters, thus freeing Dispater and his allies from area 11. Dispater doesn't emerge right away, but instead sends up his legion

devil militants (one of whom is missing a hand) to clear the passage.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Ceiling: The ceiling in area 10 is 40 feet high, while the ceilings in areas 6, 8, and 9 are 30 feet high.

Hidden Entrance: Once the trap moves off the pedestal, it reveals a yawning black hole that drops 50 feet to area 11. Luring the trap off its base also triggers tactical encounter I (following page).



Eye of Bahamut (E) Trap

Level 26 Solo Blaster
Trap
XP 45,000

A strange, many-faceted gem in the center of the chamber suddenly emits blasts of blinding light.

Trap: A glittering diamond set in a Huge stone statue flashes with light. When a creature draws too close, the light intensifies to scorch the infidel.

Perception

♦ **DC 26:** The character notices the shining jewel.

Additional Skill: Arcana

♦ **DC 31:** The character recognizes the eye of Bahamut for what it is.

Initiative +13

Trigger

When a creature enters a square within 5 squares of the Huge statue, the statue animates, rolls initiative, and makes an attack on its turn to include the triggering creature in the blast. For a move action, the statue shifts 2 squares.

Attack ♦ Radiant

Standard Action Close blast 5

Effect: The trap makes an attack to catch the most creatures it can in the blast.

Target: Each creature in blast

Attack: +29 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 4d10 + 5 radiant damage, and ongoing 5 radiant damage and the target is stunned (save ends both).

Aftereffect: The target is dazed (save ends).

Countermeasures

- ♦ An adjacent character can climb onto the statue by succeeding on a DC 26 Athletics check. A character on the statue moves with the statue when it moves. Such a character can engage in a skill challenge to detach the eye of Bahamut from the statue and thus disable the trap. DC 31 Thievery. Complexity 1 (4 successes before 3 failures). Success detaches the gem (see treasure, below) and disables the trap. Failure causes the eye of Bahamut to explode: close burst 8; targets all creatures in burst; 4d10 + 5 radiant damage, and ongoing 30 radiant damage (save ends).
- ♦ A character can attack the gem (AC 38; Fortitude 38, Reflex 38; hp 540 hit points). When reduced to 0 hit points, the eye of Bahamut explodes as described above.

1. ACCIDENTAL PRISONERS

Encounter Level 29 (76,250 XP)

SETUP

Dispater (D)

1 infernal ironguard (I)

2 legion devil militants (L)

Dispater and his allies found themselves trapped inside the vault when the Eye of Bahamut returned to its seat on the pedestal (encounter H). Dispater would eventually blast his way free or use a ritual to escape, but the items in the room have captured his attention. When the characters trigger the trap in the room above, he seizes the chance to escape.

When the characters can see into room 11, read:

The hole in the floor opens onto a dais some thirty feet below. There, steps lead down into a large gallery with more daises throughout the room, each containing oddities and treasures alike. Creatures in this room include a hulking warrior clad in plate armor and smaller, nervous-looking devils. The figure capturing your attention is a tall, slender man with a smooth head. He might pass for human if not for his cloven hooves, tail, and horns jutting from his brow.

Dispater is powerful, but he's not willing to risk his life in a needless fight against the characters. Dispater is amenable to discussion if it means his escape. However, he can see through most ruses and if it seems the characters intend to destroy him, he fights his way free.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The Lord of Dis sells out Dakranad with little remorse. The archdevil wants Amyria for himself, but the dragon has given him precious few opportunities to claim her. Dispater fears his chance at divinity may have passed and worries that Dakranad may succeed where he has failed. Thus, Dispater gives the characters what they need to know without a fight.

Provided the characters give Dispater a chance, he says:

"Ah, we meet again. It appears you have me at a disadvantage, but don't let my discourtesy hamper our reunion. I imagine you are looking for the vessel. Amyria was her name, correct? I'm afraid we are all too late. The dragon has her, and he plans to take Bahamut's mantle for himself."

If the characters have not already traveled to Torzak-Belgirn, read:

Where did he go? A place called the Soulforge. He's chasing after a creation spark, the essence of divinity. Where is this place? I can't tell you, because I simply don't know. It sounds dwarven, so the Rainfather might be the natural place to look. Now, if you don't mind, I have pressing business of my own, and I must be on my way."

If the characters have already traveled to Torzak-Belgirn, read:

I'm sure Dakranad has the creation spark by now. But don't worry, my friends. The Platinum Dragon will return, even if not in the form you hoped for. Where is he headed? The Bridge of al-Sihal, I'd imagine. Now, if you don't mind, I have pressing business of my own, and I must be on my way."

TACTICS

Dispater fights to destroy the characters, fleeing only if reduced to 300 hit points or less.

Dispater: Dispater uses *gates of Dis* to arrange the battlefield to his liking. He uses the walls to keep the characters from engaging him. Once so protected, he uses *inveigle* to dominate strikers and turn their attacks against their allies. While waiting for *inveigle* to recharge, he strikes using *scathing rod*.

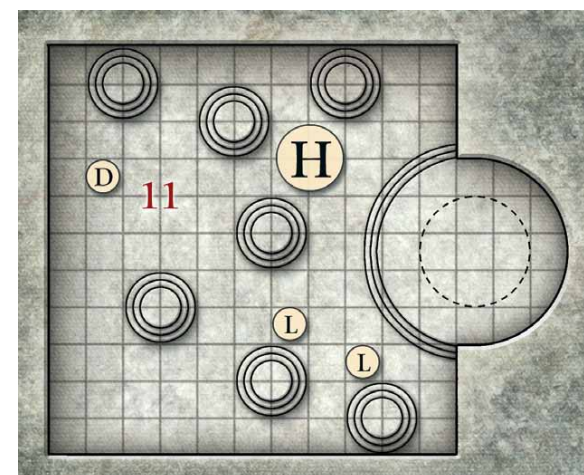
Infernal Ironguard: The ironguard moves back to take a position next to Dispater, where he uses *stab* and *smash* against any enemy that comes too close.

Legion Devil Militants: The legion devils rush the characters, putting themselves between their enemies and their master. If a character slips past them, they teleport to maintain their blocking positions.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Ceiling: The ceiling is 50 feet above the daises and 60 feet above the floor elsewhere.

Dais: Wards protect the daises.



⊕ **Warded Dais**

Violet lightning crackles around the dais, throwing you backward with agonizing force.

At-Will ♦ **Force, Lightning**

Opportunity Action **Melee**

Trigger: A non-dragon creature enters a dais square.

Target: The triggering creature

Attack: +32 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 3d8 + 10 force and lightning damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

Miss: Half damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

Treasure: Dispater managed to destroy one ward. The safe dais holds treasure parcels F, G, and H. Characters who defeat Dispater also gain the rod of Dispater.

Rod of Dispater**Level 28**

A symbol of Dispater's authority, this adamantine rod is shaped like two serpents entwined together. It grants the power to scour foes with acid.

Implement (Rod) 2,125,000 gp

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +6d8 per plus

Property: The rod functions as a +6 mace as well as an implement.

Power (At-Will): Free Action. **Trigger:** You hit with a melee attack using the rod. **Effect:** The target is pushed 2 squares and dazed (save ends).

Power (At-Will ♦ Acid, Implement): Standard Action. **Effect:** Make a ranged 20 attack; Intelligence vs. Reflex; 2d8 + Intelligence modifier acid damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

Dispater **Level 28 Solo Controller (Leader)**

Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 65,000

Initiative +20 **Senses** Perception +21; darkvision

HP 1,295; **Bloodied** 647

AC 45; **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 43, **Will** 42

Resist 30 fire

Saving Throws +5

Speed 6, teleport 10

Action Points 2

⊕ **Smiting Rod** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

Requires rod of Dispater; +34 vs. AC; 2d8 + 10 damage (crit 8d8 + 10), and the target is pushed 2 squares and dazed (save ends).

⬇ **Blasphemous Reply** (immediate reaction, when hit by a melee attack; at-will) ♦ **Thunder**

Targets the attacker; +32 vs. Will; 3d8 + 10 thunder damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

✂ **Scathing Rod** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Acid, Implement**

Requires rod of Dispater; ranged 20; +32 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 10 acid damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of Dispater's next turn.

✂ **Inveigle** (standard; recharge Ⓢ Ⓢ Ⓢ) ♦ **Charm, Psychic**

Ranged 20; +32 vs. Will; 2d8 + 10 psychic damage, and the target slides 3 squares and is dominated (save ends).

Aftereffect: The target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

✂ **Gates of Dis** (minor; at-will) ♦ **Conjuration, Fire**

Area wall 10 within 20 squares. Dispater conjures a lattice of scalding iron that lasts until the start of his next turn. The wall blocks movement and line of effect, but it does not block line of sight. Creatures that end their turns adjacent to the wall take 10 fire damage. Creatures pulled, pushed, or slid adjacent to the wall take 20 fire damage. The wall is 4 squares high and cannot be destroyed.

Diabolic Awe (free 1/round, when an enemy within 10 squares becomes bloodied or takes a critical hit; at-will) ♦ **Fear, Healing**

The enemy is pushed 3 squares away from Dispater and is dazed until the end of Dispater's next turn. Creatures with the devil keyword within 10 squares of Dispater regain 20 hit points.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal

Skills Arcana +29, Bluff +28, History +29, Insight +26, Religion +29

Str 22 (+20) **Dex** 23 (+20) **Wis** 24 (+21)

Con 27 (+22) **Int** 30 (+24) **Cha** 29 (+23)

Equipment scarlet robe, rod of Dispater

Infernal Ironguard**Level 25 Soldier**

Large immortal humanoid (devil) XP 7,000

Initiative +21 **Senses** Perception +21; darkvision

Guarding Presence aura 1; allies with the devil keyword that are in the aura gain a +2 bonus to AC and Reflex defense.

HP 234; **Bloodied** 117; see also *Dis shield*

AC 41; **Fortitude** 39, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 37

Speed 6, fly 8

⊕ **Stab and Smash** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

Reach 2; +32 vs. AC; 2d12 + 9 damage, and the target is pushed 5 squares and is knocked prone.

⬇ **Protect at any Cost** (immediate interrupt, when an adjacent ally is the target of an attack that does not include the infernal ironguard; at-will)

+30 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + 9 damage, and the target is pushed 5 squares, and is knocked prone.

Dis Shield

While not bloodied, an infernal ironguard gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against divine attack powers. While bloodied, it takes a -2 penalty to all defenses against divine attack powers.

Alignment Evil

Languages Supernal

Str 28 (+21)

Dex 24 (+19)

Wis 19 (+16)

Con 26 (+20)

Int 10 (+12)

Cha 24 (+19)

Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, bastard sword

2 Legion Devil Militants (L) **Level 26 Minion Soldier**

Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 2,250

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +14; darkvision

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 42; **Fortitude** 38, **Reflex** 37, **Will** 37

Resist 20 fire

Speed 7, teleport 3

⊕ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+34 vs. AC; 14 damage.

Squad Defense

The legion devil militant gains a +2 bonus to all defenses when adjacent to at least one other legion devil.

Alignment Evil

Languages Supernal

Str 14 (+15)

Dex 12 (+14)

Wis 12 (+14)

Con 14 (+15)

Int 10 (+13)

Cha 12 (+14)

Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, longsword

J. FINDING THE SOULFORGE

Encounter Level 25 (35,000 XP)

SETUP

Having done some initial information gathering from either Kalad or from the exalted working in Torzak-Belgirn, the characters discover that Moradin's proxy works in a hidden place called the Soulforge. So sacred is this site that its location remains a secret even from Moradin's most trusted colleagues. Many smiths and workers, however, know rumors and legends that might point the way.

When the characters first arrive at Torzak-Belgirn, read:

A fabulous city crowns the mountain. Smoke and steam rise from forges and workshops scattered across dozens of metal platforms. Staircases and bridges connect the different areas, granting access to the many factories as well as the homes, inns, and shops crowding this strange community. If Moradin is to be found, surely these people would know where.

Religion Check

DC 24: Torzak-Belgirn is also known as Moradin's Forge, and it is where his most devoted followers honor the god through the ingenious works they create. Moradin has a forge here, though there are rumors of another hidden somewhere in the mountain.

FINDING THE SOULFORGE

The answers you seek are here, somewhere, and persistence and courage will show the way.

This skill challenge unfolds in three stages. The first stage sees the characters exploring Torzak-Belgirn, looking for someone who might know the Soulforge's location. The second stage begins when the characters win an audience with Ghoren, a mighty smith and ancient champion who rules the city in Moradin's name. The characters must persuade the mayor to reveal the Soulforge's secret location. The final stage sees the characters descending the mountainside to reach the Rainfather's Beard, the legendary entrance to the mythical forge.

Level: 25 (XP 35,000)

Complexity: 5 (requires 12 success before 3 failures) Once the characters accumulate four successes, they move to the next stage.

STAGE ONE: EXPLORING TORZAK-BELGIRN

Somewhere in this city, you will find the Soulforge or at least the way to it.

Primary Skills: Diplomacy, Perception, Streetwise

Secondary Skills: Bluff, Religion

Bluff (DC 31): This check provides no successes. If the characters fail a Stealth check, one character may make a Bluff check to cancel the failure. Up to two characters can aid on this check.

Diplomacy (DC 26): The characters persuade the functionaries who restrict access to the lord that they have legitimate business and to let them past. A successful check earns 2 successes. A failed check, in addition to counting as a failure, increases future Diplomacy DCs by 2 for the duration of the skill challenge. Up to four characters can aid on this check. This skill can yield up to 4 successes (from two skill checks).

Perception (DC 17): The character spots a massive forge situated higher than all others. Strange constructs patrol its perimeter. In addition to counting as a success, a successful check opens up the Stealth skill. This skill can provide a maximum of 1 success.

Religion (DC 17): The character recalls Torzak-Belgirn is where those chosen by Moradin are invited to spend their time in the afterlife. A success by 5 or more reveals that Moradin can sometimes be found here, but he is often away at a hidden forge somewhere in the mountain. A success by 10 or more reveals that Moradin's personal forge is known simply as the Soulforge. A success by 15 or more reveals Lord Ghoren to be the proxy ruler here; if anyone would know where the Soulforge might be found, it

would be him. This skill can provide a maximum of 1 success.

Stealth (DC 26): The characters must make successful Perception and Streetwise checks before they can attempt this skill. With this check, the characters try to infiltrate Lord Ghoren's keep. This is a group check requiring each participating character to make a Stealth check. If half or more succeed, the characters earn 2 successes toward the challenge. A second successful attempt earns the characters 1 more success as they sneak past the guards and into Lord Ghoren's chambers. This check can earn a maximum of 3 successes. Failure on either attempt earns 3 failures for the group, but these can be removed with immediate Bluff checks (see above). If an immediate Bluff check fails, the skill challenge fails.

Streetwise (DC 17): The characters ask around about the Soulforge. A successful check turns up nothing definitive, but the characters do learn that Lord Ghoren would know the answer and where this lord might be found. A character who succeeds by 5 or more learns the name of an unhappy functionary who lets anyone meet the lord as a petty vengeance for some past slight, thereby granting the characters 1 extra success. A success by 10 or more also reveals that those who complement Lord Ghoren on his craftsmanship can go far with him. Up to four characters can aid on this check. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

STAGE TWO: AUDIENCE WITH LORD GHOREN

An angry dwarf with a long gray beard that gathers in a pile beneath his feet leans forward on his throne, his exquisite armor creaking.

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight

Secondary Skills: Intimidate, Perception, Religion, special

Special: Characters who are worshippers of Moradin gain a +2 bonus on skill checks made during this stage. Characters who complement Lord Ghoren on his fine armor gain a +2 bonus on Diplomacy checks made during this stage.

Bluff (DC 26): The character tries to conceal the party's true purpose for seeking out the Soulforge. Up to four characters can aid on this check. This skill can provide a maximum of 4 successes. Once a character uses Bluff, all characters have a -2 on Diplomacy checks.

Diplomacy (DC 26): The characters ask for aid in their mission, using honesty and their mission's seriousness to sway the lord to their side. Up to four characters can aid on this check. This skill can earn a maximum of 4 successes. Once a character uses Diplomacy, all characters have a -2 on Bluff checks.

Insight (DC 26): You see into the lord's heart and realize that the dwarf wants only to serve Moradin to the best of his ability. The first success with this skill reveals that Ghoren takes pride in his armor, while the second success reveals Intimidate's futility. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Intimidate: Lord Ghoren's duty outweighs any threats that the characters can put against him. Each Intimidate check counts as 1 failure.

Perception (DC 17): The character notices that Lord Ghoren wears exceptionally fine armor. This skill earns no successes.

Religion (DC 17): The character recalls Moradin's character and exploits, citing examples about Moradin's virtue to help show that the characters have common cause with the god. The characters must have earned at least 1 success with Diplomacy before using Religion will count as a success. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.



STAGE THREE: TO RAINFATHER'S BEARD

The entrance to the Soulforge lies beyond Rainfather's Beard, a waterfall near the mountain's base.

Options: Characters can reach the Rainfather's Beard by one of two ways. They can use the *spelljammer* if they have it and simply fly down, or they might just climb down the mountain.

Primary Skills: Arcana, Athletics, Religion, Streetwise, special

Secondary Skills: Acrobatics, Endurance

Acrobatics: A character can substitute an Acrobatics check for an Arcana check when flying down to Rainfather's Beard.

Arcana (DC 26): Characters flying to Rainfather's Beard must succeed on two Arcana checks to pilot the *spelljammer* through dangerous terrain. A failed Arcana check deals 50 damage to the *spelljammer* in addition to counting as a failure. One character can aid on this check. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Athletics (DC 31): Parties climbing down the mountain must make a group Athletics check. In order to count as a success, at least half the party must succeed. Failure of the group check earns 1 failure on the challenge and also results in everyone losing 1 healing surge. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Religion (DC 31): The character recalls a legend about the Rainfather's Beard being near Moradin's Hands. A success here opens up use of the Streetwise skill. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Streetwise (DC 26): Asking after Moradin's Hands and Rainfather's Beard reveals a probable location. A success by 10 or more grants a much more accurate location and an extra success. Up to four characters

can aid on this check. Streetwise skill can be used only after a successful Religion skill check. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Success: The adventurers reach the Rainfather's Beard, where they must face the elemental guardian charged with protecting the entrance.

Failure: What happens when the characters fail at the skill challenge depends on where they acquire the last failure.

Stage One: The characters get an audience with Ghoren. Remove all failed checks and move forward to the next stage. Ghoren learns of the characters' efforts to locate the Soulforge and warns the aspect. Add two slaughterstone hammerers to tactical encounter N, The Forgeworks (page 70).

Stage Two: The characters fail to impress Ghoren and earn his enmity. Five slaughterstone hammerers attack the characters in his throne room. If the characters defeat the constructs, Ghoren grudgingly reveals the location of the Soulforge. Proceed with stage three.

Stage Three: The characters reveal themselves during their descent. Add two storm gorgons to tactical encounter K (The Rainfather's Thrall, next page) and the characters are automatically surprised.

K. THE RAINFATHER'S THRALL

Encounter Level 27 (58,000 XP)

SETUP

1 storm titan (T)

4 storm gorgons (G)

The storm titan lairs in the pool formed by the cupped hands while storm gorgons crop at the nearby grass. When the characters arrive at this site, the storm titan rises from its watery lair.

When the characters arrive at this area, read:

Rainfather's Beard tumbles down the cliff's face into a frothing pool formed by two enormous, stone hands. Four gray bulls crackling with lightning stand on the nearby green. A titanic humanoid rises from the center of the pool, sending waves to spill over the hands. It has midnight blue skin and long green hair. It draws a massive blade from the pool as it roars in anger.

TACTICS

The storm titan hovers above the pool, using *howling winds* and *hurl thunderbolt* to knock the characters from the cliff. It uses *roaring greatsword* against any character who comes within reach. The storm gorgons fly outside the *storm fury* aura to *trample* and *gore* the adventurers. All creatures here fight until destroyed.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Cupped Hands: An enormous carving depicts cupped hands that catch the waterfall as it continues down the mountainside. Squares on the hands are slippery and count as difficult terrain. The water inside the cupped hands is 30 feet deep near the center.

Runoff: Water spills from the cupped hands and flows toward the cliff. Runoff squares count as difficult terrain, and any creature that starts its turn in a runoff square must make a DC 17 Athletics check as a free action or slide 2 squares toward the cliff.

Cliff: The cliff overlooks another waterfall that crashes 120 feet to another pool. A creature that falls takes 12d10 damage on landing.

Waterfall: Snowmelt and rain supply the water of this thundering fall. Squares adjacent to the waterfall are lightly obscured.

⚡ Thundering Waterfall

Frothing water tumbles down from misty heights to crash amid the cupped hands.

At-Will

Opportunity Action

Melee

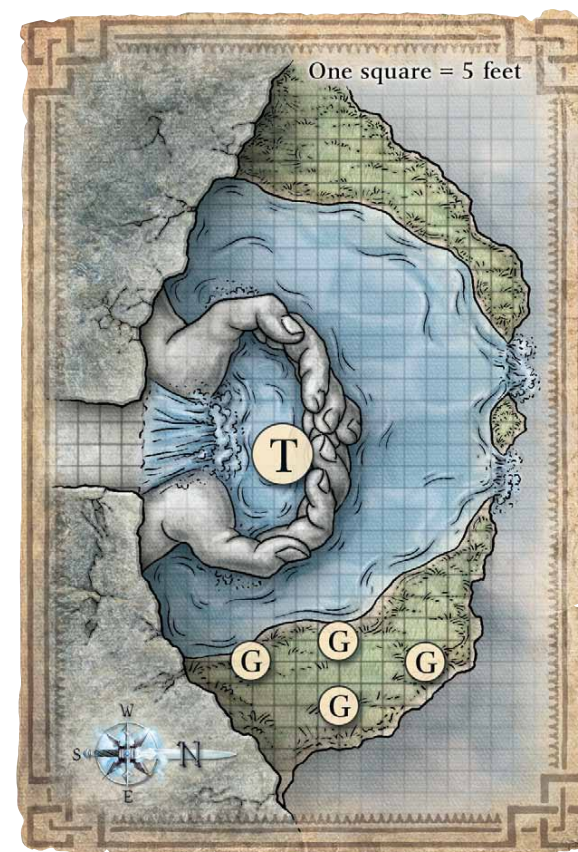
Trigger: A character enters or starts its turn in a square containing the waterfall.

Target: The triggering creature

Attack: +30 vs. Fortitude

Hit: The target is knocked prone and slides into the closest unoccupied square in cupped hands.

Miss: The target gains concealment and cover while in this square.



Storm Titan (T) Level 27 Elite Controller

Huge elemental humanoid (aquatic, giant) XP 22,000

Initiative +19 **Senses** Perception +22

Storm Fury (Lightning, Thunder) aura 4; any creature that enters or begins its turn in the aura takes 10 lightning and thunder damage; creatures other than storm giants and storm titans treat the area within the aura as difficult terrain and cannot fly.

HP 506; **Bloodied** 253

AC 43; **Fortitude** 43, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 38

Resist 30 lightning, 30 thunder

Saving Throws +2

Speed 8, fly 10 (hover), swim 8

Action Points 1

⬇ **Roaring Greatsword** (standard; at-will) ⬇ **Lightning, Thunder**

Reach 3; +32 vs. AC; 2d6 + 11 damage plus 2d8 lightning and thunder damage.

⬇ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will) ⬇ **Lightning, Thunder, Weapon**

The storm titan makes two *roaring greatsword* attacks.

⚡ **Hurl Thunderbolt** (standard; at-will) ⬇ **Lightning, Thunder**

Ranged 10; +30 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 6 lightning and thunder damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares and dazed (save ends).

⬅ **Howling Winds** (standard; recharge ⬇ ⬇ ⬇) ⬇ **Thunder**

Close burst 4; +30 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 6 thunder damage, and the target is pushed 4 squares and knocked prone. *Miss*: Half damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Giant, Primordial

Skills Diplomacy +24, Intimidate +24

Str 33 (+24) **Dex** 22 (+19) **Wis** 19 (+17)

Con 29 (+22) **Int** 14 (+15) **Cha** 22 (+19)

Equipment greatsword

4 Storm Gorgons (G) Level 26 Skirmisher

Large elemental beast XP 9,000 each

Initiative +21 **Senses** Perception +19; truesight 6

Tempest's Fury (Lightning) aura 5; any creature that enters or starts its turn in the aura takes 20 lightning damage.

HP 248; **Bloodied** 124

AC 42; **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 35

Immune knocked prone, pull/push/slide; **Resist** 20 lightning, 20 thunder

Speed 8, fly 10 (hover); see also *mobile melee attack*

⬇ **Gore** (standard; at-will) ⬇ **Thunder**

+31 vs. AC; 1d10 + 12 damage plus 2d8 thunder damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares and knocked prone.

⬇ **Mobile Melee Attack** (standard; at-will)

The storm gorgon can move up to half its speed and make one melee basic attack at any point during that movement. The storm gorgon doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when moving away from the target of its attack.

⬇ **Trample** (standard; at-will)

The storm gorgon can move up to its speed and enter enemies' spaces. This movement provokes opportunity attacks, and the gorgon must end its move in an unoccupied space. When it enters an enemy's space, the gorgon makes a trample attack: +29 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 10 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

⬅ **Storming Breath** (standard; recharge ⬇ ⬇) ⬇ **Lightning, Thunder**

Close blast 5; +29 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 20 lightning and thunder damage.

Alignment Unaligned

Languages –

Str 30 (+23) **Dex** 22 (+19) **Wis** 23 (+19)

Con 32 (+24) **Int** 2 (+9) **Cha** 8 (+12)

L. A THOUSAND TEETH

Encounter Level 26 (45,000 XP)

SETUP

Morgol the Undying (M)

An ancient hydra lairs here and protects the Soulforge from unwanted visitors.

When the characters can see the hydra, read:

A great serpent with five heads roars in outrage and lumbers forward, jaws snapping, red eyes gleaming.

Perception

DC 17: *There are no stalagmites on the floor, but stalactites hang from the ceiling by the score.*

TACTICS

Morgol the Undying is too big to maneuver through these tunnels easily, so the hydra holds its position, relying on its reach to bite the characters. Should

characters hang back and pepper it with ranged attacks, it squeezes into the adjacent chamber where it can best catch the characters with its *hydra fury* attack. Morgol the Undying fights to the death.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Dim light. Fiery veins in the walls shed dim illumination throughout these caverns.

Ceiling: The ceilings throughout these caves are 50 feet high.

Steps: Granite shelves serve as steps that descend or ascend to other caves. Squares containing steps count as difficult terrain.

Stalactites: Sharp stalactites hang throughout these caves, though no stalagmites emerge from the floor (the hydra cleared these). Each ceiling square in a natural cavern contains one stalactite. A creature can break off a stalactite by using the following terrain power.

☞ Falling Stalactite Single Use Terrain

The stalactite ends at a sharp point. With the right pressure, you might break it free to send it down and impale any creature below it.

Single-Use (per square)

Standard Action **Ranged**

Check: Strength check, DC 31

Effect: The stalactite falls and makes an attack.

Target: One creature below the stalactite

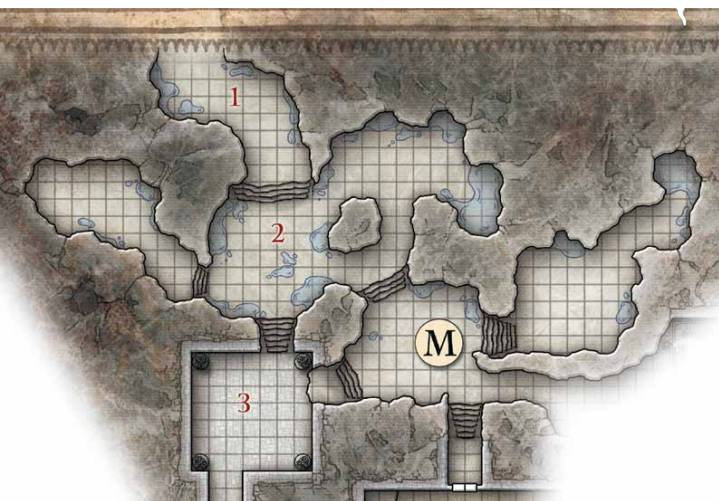
Attack: +29 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d8 + 9 damage, and the target is immobilized.

Miss: The square is filled with rubble and counts as difficult terrain until cleared.

Treasure: In one side chamber, the characters find the hydra's hoard, which consists of parcel I.

Morgol the Undying	Level 26 Solo Brute
Gargantuan immortal beast (reptile), hydra	XP 45,000
Initiative +19	Senses Perception +23; all-around vision
HP 980; Bloodied 490; see also <i>regenerating heads</i>	
AC 38; Fortitude 40, Reflex 36, Will 36	
Saving Throws +5	
Speed 6	
Action Points 2	
☉ Bite (standard; at-will) Radiant	
	Reach 4; +31 vs. AC; 2d8 + 10 damage plus 1d8 radiant damage.
⚔ Hydra Fury (standard; at-will)	
	Morgol makes five bite attacks, plus an additional attack for each head it has grown (see <i>regenerating heads</i>). A target hit by more than one bite attack in a round takes 10 extra damage.
⚔ Rampage (standard; recharges when a critical hit is scored against Morgol)	
	Morgol makes one bite attack against each enemy within its reach. On a hit, the target also takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends).
Heroslayer	
	While Morgol is marked, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +10 bonus to damage rolls against the creature that marked it.
Many-Headed	
	Each time Morgol would become dazed or stunned, it instead loses one attack while using <i>hydra fury</i> during its next turn. Morgol can be dazed or stunned multiple times.
Regenerating Heads	
	When Morgol first reaches 735, 490, and 245 hit points, a head is destroyed. At the start of Morgol's next turn after a head is destroyed, two heads grow in the lost head's place, and Morgol gains an additional bite attack with <i>hydra fury</i> .
Threatening Reach	
	Morgol can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (4 squares).
Alignment Unaligned	Languages —
Str 26 (+21)	Dex 22 (+19) Wis 21 (+18)
Con 29 (+22)	Int 2 (+9) Cha 10 (+13)



M. GODSWORN WARRIORS

Encounter Level 27 (57,000 XP)

SETUP

- 1 iron golem juggernaut (J)
- 1 godforged bolter (B)
- 2 godforged slashers (S)

Moradin depleted his barracks when he left to meet with the other gods. The servants he left behind represent but a token force, but they savagely attack anyone who intrudes.

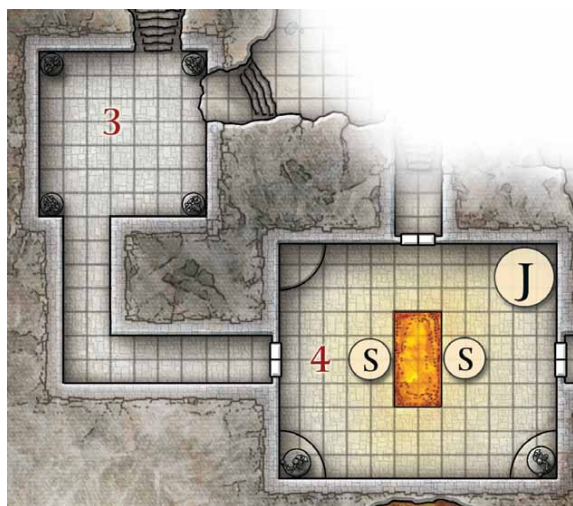
When the characters open any door to this room, read:

A large room, easily sixty feet across with a tall ceiling, holds a looming iron statue armed with a cruel blade and two humanoid constructs bristling with blades and saws. Three platforms fill three corners. Atop two are stone statues depicting dwarves. The third holds a stumpy construct whose upper body is an overlarge crossbow. A roaring fire fills the room's center.

TACTICS

The constructs are under orders to attack unauthorized intruders. Upon opening any door, the creatures animate and attack.

Iron Golem Juggernaut: The construct opens with its *breath weapon* to catch as many characters as it can. It then closes on any leading intruders, spending an action point to *cleave*. The iron golem must squeeze to leave this room, but it risks it to pursue the characters into adjoining chambers.



Godforged Bolter: This construct remains on the ledge, using *impaling bolt* to pin down characters in the iron golem's reach. It reloads and repeats this attack each round. Should any characters close on it, it uses *missile defense* and then slams the enemy off the platform. The godforged bolter remains where it is unless the characters flee, at which point it descends to give chase.

Godforged Slashers: The slashers work with the iron golem, taking positions opposite the golem if possible. The slashers use *flensing blades* only when presented with two or more targets. Otherwise they use their *slashing blades*. Note that these constructs spawn shattered progeny when damaged. These constructs stay close to their creators so they can be reincorporated into the godforged slasher if need be. Like the others, the slashers and their progeny pursue fleeing characters.

Iron Golem Juggernaut (J) Level 26 Elite Soldier
Huge natural animate (construct) XP 18,000

Initiative +19 **Senses** Perception +15; darkvision
Noxious Fumes aura 3; while the iron golem juggernaut is bloodied, any creature that enters or starts its turn in the aura takes 10 poison damage.

HP 488; **Bloodied** 244; see also *toxic death*

AC 42; **Fortitude** 43, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 36

Immune disease, poison, sleep

Saving Throws +2

Speed 6 (cannot shift)

Action Points 1

⊕ **Iron Blade** (standard; at-will)

Reach 3; +33 vs. AC; 3d10 + 5 damage, and the target is marked (save ends).

⊕ **Cleave** (standard; at-will)

The iron golem juggernaut makes two iron blade attacks, each against a different target.

⊕ **Dazing Fist** (immediate interrupt, when a creature marked by the iron golem juggernaut and within its reach moves or shifts; at-will)

Reach 3; targets the triggering creature; +31 vs. Fortitude; the target is dazed (save ends).

⚡ **Breath Weapon** (standard; recharge ⓧ ⓧ) ⚡ **Poison**

Close blast 5; +31 vs. Fortitude; 4d8 + 9 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

⚡ **Toxic Death** (when first bloodied and again when the iron golem juggernaut drops to 0 hit points) ⚡ **Poison**

Close burst 5; +31 vs. Fortitude; 3d10 + 6 poison damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

Alignment Unaligned

Languages —

Str 30 (+23)

Dex 18 (+17)

Wis 14 (+15)

Con 28 (+22)

Int 3 (+9)

Cha 3 (+9)

Equipment longsword

2 Godforged Slashers (S)	Level 29 Brute
Large immortal animate (construct)	XP 15,000 each
Initiative +22 Senses Perception +21; darkvision	
Spinning Blades aura 1; each creature that starts its turn in the aura takes 20 damage.	
HP 328; Bloodied 164	
AC 41; Fortitude 43, Reflex 41, Will 40	
Immune disease, poison, sleep	
Speed 6 (cannot shift)	
⊕ Slashing Blades (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +32 vs. AC; 4d8 + 10 damage.	
⚡ Flensing Blades (standard; recharges when first bloodied)	
Close burst 2; targets enemies; +32 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and ongoing 15 damage (save ends).	
⬇ Hasty Repair (minor; at-will) Healing	
Reach 2; targets one shattered progeny; the shattered progeny is destroyed and the godforged slasher regains 40 hit points.	
Shattered Progeny (free, when reduced to 246, 164, 82, and 0 hit points)	
Place a shattered progeny token in an unoccupied space adjacent to the godforged smasher, and reduce the godforge slasher's spinning blades damage by 5.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages –	
Str 30 (+24) Dex 27 (+22) Wis 24 (+21)	
Con 28 (+23) Int 2 (+10) Cha 8 (+13)	

Shattered Progeny	Level 29 Minion Brute
Small immortal animate (construct)	XP –
Initiative as creator Senses Perception +21; darkvision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion	
AC 41; Fortitude 43, Reflex 41, Will 40	
Immune disease, poison, sleep	
Speed 4	
⊕ Spinning Blades (standard; at-will)	
+32 vs. AC; 18 damage.	
⚡ Exploding Construct (when reduced to 0 hit points) Fire, Radiant	
Close burst 1; +30 vs. Reflex; 18 fire and radiant damage.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages –	
Str 30 (+24) Dex 27 (+22) Wis 24 (+21)	
Con 28 (+23) Int 2 (+10) Cha 8 (+13)	

Godforged Bolter (B)	Level 26 Artillery
Medium immortal animate (construct)	XP 9,000
Initiative +23 Senses Perception +18; darkvision	
HP 185; Bloodied 92	
AC 41; Fortitude 38, Reflex 41, Will 36	
Immune disease, poison, sleep	
Speed 4 (cannot shift)	
⊕ Slam (standard; at-will)	
+31 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.	
✈ Impaling Bolt (standard; at-will) Weapon	
Ranged 10; +31 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 10 damage, the target is immobilized (save ends), and the godforged bolter pushes the target 1 square. <i>Aftereffect:</i> The target takes 10 damage.	
⚡ Missile Defense (immediate reaction, when hit by a melee attack; recharges when first bloodied)	
Close burst 10; +28 vs. Reflex; 4d10 + 8 damage.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages –	
Str 25 (+20) Dex 30 (+23) Wis 20 (+18)	
Con 23 (+19) Int 2 (+9) Cha 8 (+12)	

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Bright light. A fiery pool in the chamber's center illuminates the room.

Doors: The steel doors are closed but not locked. They feel warm to the touch.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 70 feet overhead.

Platforms: Three platforms rise 30 feet above the floor in three corners. Rungs set in their faces grant access to their surfaces. A fall from a platform deals 3d10 damage.

Statues: Two statues atop platforms resemble towering dwarven warriors armed with greataxes and clad in plate armor. A statue has AC/Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, and 40 hit points.

⬇ **Warding Statues**

The statue comes to life to shove you from the platform.

Opportunity Action

Trigger: A creature starts its turn or enters a square adjacent to the statue

Target: The triggering creature

Attack: +30 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d8 + 9 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

Fire Pit: Roiling flames burn in a stone basin at the room's center. Living creatures adjacent to the fire pit take a –2 penalty to attack rolls.

⬇ **Fire Pit**

Heat from the raging fires leaches your strength and resolve.

Opportunity Action

Trigger: A creature starts its turn or enters a fire pit square.

Target: The triggering creature

Attack: +30 vs. Fortitude

Hit: 2d6 + 9 fire damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage (save end). If the creature already has ongoing fire damage, it instead takes an extra 4d6 fire damage.

Miss: Half damage.

Ceiling Hooks: Row upon row of hooks line the ceiling. Dormant constructs once hung from the hooks like toys. Now all the hooks are empty.

N. FORGEWORKS

Encounter Level 26 (49,000 XP)

SETUP

Forgeworks (N for Nozzles, C for Claw)
5 slaughterstone hammerers (H)

This chamber contains a wicked trap designed to take raw ore and turn it into liquid metal. The slaughterstone hammerers ensure unwilling objects make it into the crucible.

When the characters enter this room, read:

A raised pathway with a moving surface fills the room with noise. Hulking humanoid constructs equipped with hammer arms turn as one to note your presence.

5 Slaughterstone Hammerers (H) Level 25 Soldier
Large natural animate (construct) XP 7,000

Initiative +14 **Senses** Perception +12; darkvision
Thunder Step aura 2; each creature that starts its turn within the aura is slowed until the start of its next turn.

HP 233; **Bloodied** 116
AC 41; **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 35, **Will** 35

Immune disease, poison, sleep

Speed 6

⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)

Reach 2; +32 vs. AC; 2d8 + 10 damage, and the target is knocked prone.

⊖ **Hammerstrike** (standard; at-will)

Reach 2; +28 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 10 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

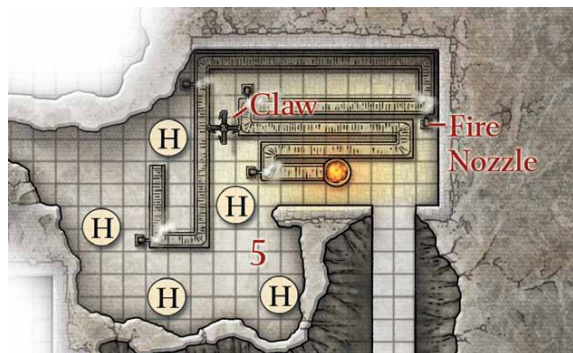
Tunnel Fighting

A slaughterstone hammerer takes no penalty to attack rolls while squeezing and does not grant combat advantage while squeezing.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –

Str 28 (+21) **Dex** 11 (+12) **Wis** 10 (+12)

Con 25 (+19) **Int** 1 (+7) **Cha** 3 (+8)



Perception Check

DC 26: A control panel stands against the far wall near the room's exit.

Forgeworks **Level 25 Elite Blaster**
Trap XP 14,000

The room is alive with industry, with bright sparks, streams of liquid fire, and choking clouds of smoke.

Trap: The trap consists of several components linked by the conveyor belt running through the room. A clawed hand snatches creatures and places them on the conveyor belt. Where indicated on the map, nozzles fire jets of superheated steam, and the conveyor belt deposits anything on it into the crucible at its end.

Perception

◆ **DC 31:** A character spots the control panel on the opposite side of the room.

Additional Skill: Dungeoneering

◆ **DC 28:** The character identifies the nozzle locations.

Trigger

The trap makes the following attacks on the indicated turns.

Attack (Initiative 20, 10, 0)

No Action

Melee

Target: Each creature on the conveyor belt

Effect: The creature slides 2 squares in the direction indicated on the map.

Attack (Initiative 15, 5)

Minor Action **Melee**

Target: One random non-construct creature not on a conveyor belt square

TACTICS

The slaughterstone hammerers try to prevent characters from escaping the room. They give preference to characters on the conveyor belt.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Dim light. Fiery veins and the crucible offer scant illumination.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 40 feet high.

Conveyor Belt: A 5-foot-wide conveyor belt runs through the room. Squares containing the conveyor belt count as difficult terrain.

Treasure: Leavings from melted-down items litters the floor. Sifting through it reveals parcels J, K, and L.

Attack: +28 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d8 + 9 damage, and the target slides to the closest square containing the conveyor belt.

Miss: Half damage

Attack (Initiative 25) ♦ Fire

Standard Action Close blast 2

Target: Each creature in the blast for each nozzle

Attack: +26 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d8 + 9 fire damage, and the target is dazed and immobilized until the end of its next turn.

Attack ♦ Fire

Opportunity Action **Melee**

Trigger: A creature enters or starts its turn in the crucible

Target: The triggering creature

Effect: The creature takes 4d10 fire damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends). A creature cannot make saving throws to end the ongoing damage until it exits the crucible (DC 26 Athletics check).

Countermeasures

◆ A character adjacent to the control panel can shut off the device and disable the trap by engaging in a skill challenge. DC 31 Thievery. Complexity 2 (6 successes before 3 failures). Success shuts off the conveyor belt and the forgeworks can only make the opportunity action attack. Failure causes the control panel to explode: close blast 7; +28 vs. Reflex; 3d12 + 9 damage, and the target is knocked prone and dazed (save ends). The trap is disabled if the control panel explodes.

O. ANGELIC DEFENDERS

Encounter Level 25 (35,400 XP)

SETUP

4 angels of supremacy (S)

14 angel of valor legionnaires (V)

The angels position themselves between the characters and Moradin's aspect in the room beyond. The angels do not attack unless the characters try to cross the bridge.

When the characters enter this room, read:

Shimmering humanoid figures hang like stars in the sky, each a glowing light hovering over a yawning darkness. A white stone bridge crosses the chasm, but the angels seem ready to block any progress.

TACTICS

The angels are here to protect Moradin's aspect by denying passage to the chamber beyond.

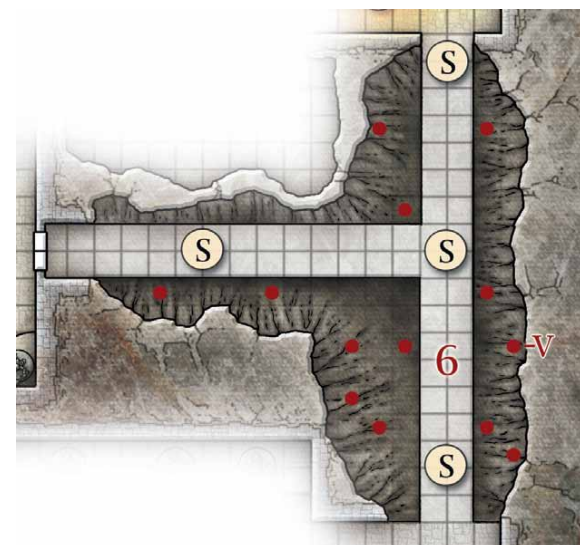
Angels of Supremacy: These angels hover 5 feet above their positions. When a character engages an angel, it uses *astral brilliance* and makes its stand

14 Angel of Valor Legionnaires	Level 21 Minion
Medium immortal humanoid (angel)	XP 800 each
Initiative +14	Senses Perception +12
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 35; Fortitude 35, Reflex 31, Will 30	
Immune fear; Resist 10 fire, 10 radiant	
Speed 6, fly 9 (hover)	
⚔ Greatsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Weapon	
+26 vs. AC; 9 fire damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Supernal
Str 26 (+18)	Dex 18 (+14)
Con 18 (+14)	Int 12 (+11)
	Wis 14 (+12)
	Cha 16 (+13)
Equipment chainmail, greatsword	

4 Angels of Supremacy	Level 24 Soldier
Large immortal humanoid (angel)	XP 6,050 each
Initiative +19	Senses Perception +18
HP 226; Bloodied 113	
AC 40; Fortitude 38, Reflex 36, Will 35	
Immune fear; Resist 15 radiant	
Speed 8, fly 12 (hover)	
⚔ Spear (standard; at-will) ♦ Thunder, Weapon	
Reach 3; +31 vs. AC; 1d10 + 9 damage plus 1d10 thunder damage.	
✈ Light of Justice (standard; encounter) ♦ Radiant	
Ranged 10; +29 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 9 radiant damage.	
Effect: The target is marked until the end of the encounter.	
✈ Summons to Justice (minor 1/round; at-will)	
Ranged sight; targets creatures marked by the angel of supremacy; no attack roll; the angel of supremacy pulls the target 1 square.	
⚡ Astral Brilliance (standard; encounter) ♦ Radiant, Zone	
Close burst 3; +29 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 9 radiant damage.	
Effect: The burst creates a zone of radiance that lasts until the end of the encounter. The angel of supremacy's spear attack deals 1d10 extra radiant damage while the angel is within the zone.	
Angelic Presence (while not bloodied)	
Any attack against the angel of supremacy takes a -2 penalty to the attack roll.	
Threatening Reach	
An angel of supremacy can make opportunity attacks against all enemies in reach.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Supernal
Skills Intimidate +21	
Str 29 (+21)	Dex 21 (+17)
Con 26 (+20)	Int 25 (+19)
	Wis 22 (+18)
	Cha 19 (+16)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, spear	

inside the zone it creates. These angels use *summons to justice* to pull fleeing enemies back into their zones or *light of justice* to destroy any characters who slip past. The angels of supremacy fight to the death, but pursue only if characters move into room 7.

Angels of Valor: These angels support their larger kin, swooping down to make attacks using their greatswords. They bolster any allies engaged in combat.



FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Dim light. The angels' glow combined with the ever-present light shining from the fiery veins in the walls illuminate this chamber.

Ceiling: The ceiling rises 100 feet overhead.

Bridge: The bridge is made from stone. Struts beneath anchor it to the walls.

Chasm: A deep chasm yawns below the bridge, dropping 200 feet to a mound of shattered metal, springs, cogs, and other detritus. A character who falls can make a saving throw to catch him- or herself on the struts below the bridge. From the struts, it requires a move action and a DC 17 Athletics check to return to the bridge. Otherwise, the character takes 20d10 damage upon landing at the chasm's bottom. The struts make it easy to climb out of the chasm (DC 17 Athletics).

P. MORADIN'S FORGE

Encounter Level 28 (65,000 XP)

SETUP

Aspect of Moradin (A)

1 forgespirit (F)

2 godforged blade bearers (G)

8+ forgesworn dwarves (D)

The adventurers are again too late. By anticipating their movements, Dakranad arrived at the forge ahead of the heroes. There, with the aid of dark magic, he persuaded the aspect of Moradin to give him a creation spark by explaining that Amyria housed Bahamut's essence and that he needed the spark to release the essence and thus restore the Platinum Dragon to life. Thinking that this is exactly what Moradin would want (and encouraged by Dakranad's sorcery), the aspect gave the creation spark to the dragon. Before Dakranad left, he warned the aspect that the characters would be following soon after and suggested that they want to prevent Bahamut's rebirth because they want to save Amyria's life. Thus, when the characters find the aspect, they see he is both sympathetic but resolved to stop them at any cost.

When the characters enter this room, read:

Brilliant flames roil and flare at the room's far end. Before them stands a mighty anvil on which you see hammers, tongs, and other tools. A muscled, idealized dwarf dressed in full plate armor and gripping an enormous hammer in his fist turns from the anvil. The dwarf smoothes his singed beard and regards you with sad eyes while two hulking constructs step forward, brandishing spinning saw blades. Eight more dwarves stand before smaller anvils and forges.

They ignore your presence as their hammers rise and fall in perfect unison.

If the characters don't attack right away, read:

The dwarf speaks, his voice the sound of mountains shifting on their foundations. "Your purpose is noble but selfish. Friendship demands loyalty, yet there are times when you must set aside your misgivings for the good of the world. Although you have violated my sanctum, I am willing to forgive your trespass if you return whence you came and give up this foolish mission."

The aspect answers questions as long as the characters make no aggressive moves. What follows are answers to likely questions.

What are you talking about? You have come to save the deva's life, but you will not find her here. Dakranad has taken her to find her destiny.

Her destiny? She houses Bahamut's essence. The mithral dragon intends to unleash this essence so the Platinum Dragon can be reborn.

Give us the creation spark! I have it no longer. I gave it to Dakranad. Even if I wanted to, I could not give it to you. The Crucible bestows this blessing but once each century.

Where is Dakranad now? I cannot tell you, lest you interfere in his mission.

To gain more information about where Dakranad is heading, the characters must engage in a skill challenge to persuade the aspect that they too want to see Bahamut restored. If the characters threaten the aspect or make any aggressive move, the aspect attacks. The characters can still try to persuade the aspect of their intentions during the combat, but the DCs are 2 higher than those listed below.

COMMON CAUSE

The aspect grieves for your troubles, but his own loyalty to Bahamut blinds him to your true purpose.

Level: 28 (XP 26,000)

Complexity: 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures).

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Religion, special

Secondary Skill: Insight

Special: If the characters defeated Dispat and show his head or his rod as proof of the dragon's corruption, the characters automatically earn 2 successes. (2 successes, maximum 2 successes)

Arcana (DC 31): The character tries to unravel the enchantment beguiling the aspect. This skill cannot be used unless a successful Insight check has been made (see below). Up to four characters can aid on this check. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Bluff (DC 30): The character fabricates evidence against Dakranad. In addition to counting as two failures, a failed check counts as two failures, closes off future Bluff checks, and each new attempt results in 1 more automatic failure. This skill can earn a maximum of 4 successes.

Diplomacy (DC 26): The character cites truthful evidence about Dakranad's corruption or recounts the party's past alliance with the Platinum Dragon. This skill can earn a maximum of 4 successes.

Insight (DC 31): The character identifies that the aspect of Moradin has been ensorcelled by the mithral dragon. A successful check counts as 0 successes but opens up use of the Arcana skill.

Religion (DC 17): The character recalls Moradin's character and shows how the aspect's actions are

at odds with the god's nature. This skill can earn a maximum of 1 success.

Success: The characters break the enchantment and the aspect of Moradin realizes that the mithral dragon tricked him. Enraged by this, he urges the characters to venture to Bahamut's Palace (if the characters haven't yet been there) or to the Bridge of al-Sihal (if the characters have already been to Bahamut's Palace). Alternatively, if Amyria is still with the characters, the aspect gives them the creation spark and advises them to seek the Bridge of al-Sihal to witness Bahamut's imminent return.

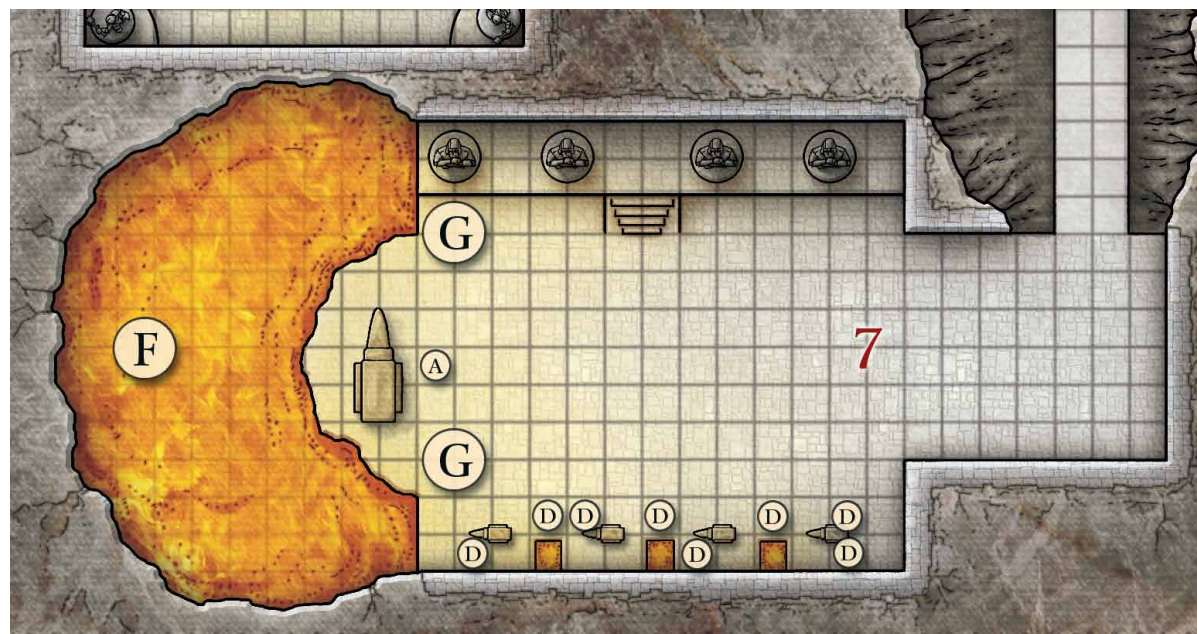
Failure: The aspect of Moradin believes the characters are trying to trick him. He commands his servants to attack.

TACTICS

Aspect of Moradin: The aspect uses *mountain-fall charge* first, hoping to drive the characters back onto the bridge and into the chasm beyond. The aspect then uses *rippling earth* to keep driving back the adventurers. After, the aspect presses the attack using *whirling hammer*. He fights until destroyed and gives no quarter; he will even pause to dispatch dying characters. Such an affront as a fight in this sacred chamber allows for no mercy.

Forgespirit: Starting on the second round, the forgespirit, the very essence of creation, emerges from the Crucible of Light to aid the aspect. It moves to where *forge burst* can be most effective and then uses that power. While sustaining it, it uses *unearthly bel-lows* to send enemies through the flames it created.

Godforged Blade Bearers: These constructs hit prone enemies with their *swift blade* attacks. They move constantly, striking at every creature in their reach.



Forgesworn Dwarf: The minions avoid combat until at least one godforged blade bearer is reduced to 0 hit points. The minions then attack en masse and gang up on one enemy at a time using their warhammers.

Statues: Two statues atop platforms resemble towering dwarven warriors armed with greataxes and clad in plate armor. A statue has AC/Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, and 40 hit points.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Bright light. The Crucible of Light fills the room with bright light.

Ceiling: The ceiling is 100 feet overhead.

God Anvil: The mighty anvil stands at the end of the room. Immortal creatures within 5 squares of the anvil gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls and deal 5 extra radiant damage on all melee attacks.

Ledge: A ledge stands 10 feet above the floor.

Stairs: A staircase grants access to the ledge. Squares containing stairs count as difficult terrain.

Aspect of Moradin (A) Level 26 Elite Soldier (Leader)

Medium immortal humanoid XP 18,000

Initiative +20 **Senses** Perception +20; low-light vision, truesight 10**Victorious Song** aura 5; allies in the aura that can hear the aspect of Moradin gain a +2 power bonus to attack rolls.**HP** 482; **Bloodied** 241**AC** 42; **Fortitude** 41, **Reflex** 36, **Will** 38**Immune** poison**Saving Throws** +2**Speed** 5; teleport 5**Action Points** 1⬇ **Crushing Hammer** (standard; at-will) **Weapon**

+33 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

⬇ **Grudge Strike** (immediate reaction, when an enemy hits the aspect of Moradin with a melee attack; at-will) **Weapon**The aspect of Moradin makes a *crushing hammer* attack against the triggering enemy.⬇ **Bonecrusher Strike** (immediate interrupt, when an adjacent enemy uses the stand up action; at-will) **Weapon**

+31 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 10 damage, the target is knocked prone, and cannot stand (save ends).

⬇ **Mountainfall Charge** (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ **Thunder, Weapon**

The aspect of Moradin shifts 5 squares ignoring difficult terrain and makes an attack at the end of this movement: +34 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage, the target is stunned (save ends), and all enemies adjacent to the target take 10 thunder damage and are pushed 5 squares.

⬅ **Rippling Earth** (standard; recharge ☐☐) **Weapon**

Close burst 5; +31 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 10 damage, the target is pushed to the edge of the burst and knocked prone.

⬅ **Whirling Hammer** (standard; at-will) **Weapon**Close burst 1; one or two targets; +31 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of its next turn. *Effect:* If one or both attacks miss, the aspect of Moradin makes a secondary attack that does not provoke opportunity attacks: Ranged 10; targets one enemy not targeted by whirling hammer; +35 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage, and the target is pushed 5 squares and knocked prone.**Rooted in Stone**

The aspect of Moradin can only be forcibly moved—by a push, a pull, or a slide—if he chooses to be, and then may choose the distance he is forcibly moved up to the maximum the effect specifies. The aspect of Moradin cannot be knocked prone.

Alignment Lawful good**Languages** Common, Dwarven, Supernal**Skills** Athletics +28, Diplomacy +23, Dungeoneering +27, Endurance +27, History +20, Insight +25, Intimidate +23**Str** 30 (+23)**Dex** 20 (+18)**Wis** 25 (+20)**Con** 25 (+20)**Int** 15 (+15)**Cha** 20 (+18)**Equipment** plate armor, heavy shield, warhammer⬇ **Warding Statues***The statue comes to life to shove you from the platform.***Opportunity Action****Trigger:** A creature starts its turn or enters a square adjacent to the statue**Target:** The triggering creature**Attack:** +30 vs. Fortitude**Hit:** 2d8 + 9 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares.

Crucible of Light: Beyond the God Anvil is the Crucible of Light. Once every century, Moradin can extract a creation spark from its fires. These sparks are pure possibility. Left on their own, they might

give these treasures to a party that succeeds on the skill challenge, but characters who defeat the aspect may take them anyway.

If the characters have Amyria in their possession and successfully negotiated with the aspect, they also receive the creation spark. A golden locket contains its power. Aside from the hammer embossed on one side and an anvil on the other, the item seems mundane. Opening the locket releases blinding light: +32 vs. Fortitude; the target is blinded (save ends).

CONCLUSION

If the characters end this encounter without destroying the aspect of Moradin, award them experience points as if they had.

evolve into new gods, dominions, or even worlds. Non-immortal creatures entering or starting their turns in a space adjacent to the crucible take 20 fire and radiant damage. Any character attempting to enter the Crucible of Light is automatically pushed 1d10 squares and knocked prone.

Forges and Anvils: Opposite the ledge is a row of forges and anvils. Creatures entering or starting their turns in a square containing a forge take 10 fire damage.

Treasure: Positioned atop the God Anvil are treasure parcels M, N, O, and P. The aspect of Moradin

Forgespirit (F)	Level 25 Controller
Large immortal magical beast (air, earth, fire)	XP 7,000
Initiative +19 Senses Perception +17	
HP 236; Bloodied 118	
AC 39; Fortitude 39, Reflex 37, Will 35	
Immune disease, petrification, poison; Resist 20 fire	
Speed 6	
⬇ Fiery Touch (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire	
Reach 2; +29 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 8 fire damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends). If this attack hits a target already suffering from ongoing fire damage, the attack instead deals 10 extra fire damage.	
⬇ Hammer on Anvil (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +29 vs. Fortitude; 3d8 + 8 damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares and knocked prone.	
⚡ Forge Burst (standard; sustain: minor; encounter) ♦ Fire, Zone	
Close burst 3; +29 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 9 fire damage. <i>Effect:</i> The squares along the edge of the burst become a zone of raging fire that lasts until the end of the forgespirit's next turn (sustain minor). Any creature that starts its turn inside or enters the zone takes 20 fire damage.	
⚡ Unearthly Bellows (standard; encounter)	
Close blast 5; +29 vs. Fortitude; 3d10 + 6 damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares, and slowed (save ends).	
Alignment Unaligned Languages Primordial	
Str 26 (+20) Dex 25 (+19) Wis 21 (+17)	
Con 28 (+21) Int 6 (+10) Cha 15 (+14)	

2 Godforged Blade Bearers (G)	Level 27 Skirmisher
Large immortal animate (construct)	XP 11,000 each
Initiative +24 Senses Perception +26; truesight 10	
HP 245; Bloodied 122	
AC 42; Fortitude 37, Reflex 40, Will 39	
Immune disease, poison sleep	
Speed 8; see also <i>swift blade</i>	
⬇ Swift Blade (minor; at-will)	
Reach 2; +32 vs. AC; 3d8 + 9 damage, and the godforged blade bearer shifts 1 square.	
⚡ Sparking Damage (when reduced to 183, 122, 61, and 0 hit points) ♦ Lightning, Radiant	
Close burst 1; +30 vs. Reflex; 5d10 lightning and radiant damage.	
Murderous Intent (while marked by an enemy)	
The godforged blade bearer's <i>swift blade</i> attacks deals 2d8 extra damage to targets that mark it.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages –	
Str 23 (+19) Dex 29 (+22) Wis 26 (+21)	
Con 21 (+18) Int 4 (+10) Cha 8 (+12)	

8 Forgesworn Dwarf (D)	Level 26 Minion Brute
Medium immortal humanoid, dwarf	XP 2,250 each
Initiative +18 Senses Perception +19; low-light vision	
HP 1; a minion never takes damage from a miss.	
AC 36; Fortitude 40, Reflex 36, Will 37	
Speed 5	
⬇ Warhammer (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+29 vs. AC; 17 damage.	
Stand Your Ground	
When an effect forces a dwarf to move—through a pull, a push, or a slide—the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock a dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.	
Eternal Returns	
If a forgesworn dwarf is reduced to 0 hit points while in the aspect of Moradin's <i>victorious song</i> aura, two more forgesworn dwarves appear in unoccupied spaces adjacent to the aspect of Moradin at the end of his next turn.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, Dwarven	
Str 26 (+21) Dex 20 (+18) Wis 23 (+19)	
Con 28 (+22) Int 10 (+13) Cha 10 (+13)	
Equipment chainmail, heavy shield, warhammer	

Q. WAR FOR HEAVEN

Encounter Level 32 (140,000 XP)

SETUP

Dakranad (D)

Zachariel (Z)

The characters chase the mithral dragon to the city, follow the path up the highest peak (Chronias, the Radiant Throne), and find the Bridge of al-Sihal. How the characters find the bridge depends on their circumstances. If Amyria is with the characters, Dakranad attacks before she can confront Zachariel. If the dragon has Amyria, it battles the archangel to win its way past.

If Amyria is with the characters, read:

The bridge stretches ahead, vanishing into a curtain of golden light. A magnificent figure stands before it—an angel. Its obscured features reveal little of its intent, but the flaming sword it wields suggests only worthy souls can pass. Just as you get your bearings, a dark shadow crosses you, a shadow cast by a fearsome mithral dragon.

If Amyria is with the dragon, read:

The bridge stretches ahead, vanishing into a curtain of golden light. Before the light, a fearsome mithral dragon battles a powerful angel. Claw crashes against fiery sword as the two clash. Around the dragon's neck hangs a golden locket and in its claw, you see Amyria's unconscious body, blood running from her open mouth.

Arcana Check

DC 18: *The golden locket shines with power and it appears to contain the creation spark you seek.*

Dakranad, Mithral Dragon Level 29 Solo Skirmisher

Huge immortal magical beast (dragon) XP 65,000

Initiative +27 Senses Perception +27; darkvision

HP 1,052; Bloodied 526; see also *bloodied breath*

AC 44; Fortitude 41, Reflex 43, Will 41

Resist 25 radiant

Saving Throws +5

Speed 10, fly 12 (hover), overland flight 15, teleport 10

Action Points 2

⬇ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Radiant**

Reach 3; +34 vs. AC; 2d8 + 11 damage, and ongoing radiant 15 radiant damage (save ends).

⬇ **Claw** (standard; at-will)

Reach 3; +34 vs. AC; 3d8 + 8 damage.

⬇ **Dimension Strike** (minor; at-will) **Teleportation**

The dragon teleports 5 squares, makes a *claw* attack, teleports 5 squares, and makes a *claw* attack against a different target.

⬇ **Wing Buffet** (minor; recharge ⓧⓧ)

Reach 3; +32 vs. Fortitude; 4d10 + 8 damage, and the target is pushed 3 squares.

✧ **Mithral Prescience** (minor; at-will)

Ranged 10; the target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses against the dragon's attacks until the dragon uses this power against another target.

⬅ **Breath Weapon** (standard; recharge ⓧⓧ) ♦ **Radiant**

Close blast 5; +32 vs. Reflex; 4d10 + 6 radiant damage, and the target is blinded (save ends). Miss: Half damage.

⬅ **Bloodied Breath** (free, when first bloodied; encounter)

Breath weapon recharges, and the dragon uses it.

⬅ **Dimensional Flurry** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Radiant**

Close burst 10; targets up to four enemies; +32 vs. Reflex; 4d6 + 5 damage, and the target takes ongoing 15 radiant damage and is dazed (save ends both). *Effect:* The dragon teleports to a space in the burst.

⬅ **Frightful Presence** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Fear**

Close burst 10; targets enemies; +32 vs. Will; the target is stunned until the end of the dragon's next turn. Aftereffect: The target takes a X2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).

Prophetic Defense (immediate interrupt, when the dragon is hit by an attack; at-will) ♦ **Teleportation**

The dragon gains a +4 bonus to all defenses against the triggering attack. If the attack misses, the dragon teleports 6 squares.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic, Supernal
Skills Diplomacy +26, History +26, Insight +27, Intimidate +26, Religion +26

Str 27 (+22)

Dex 32 (+25)

Wis 27 (+22)

Con 23 (+20)

Int 25 (+21)

Cha 25 (+21)

TACTICS

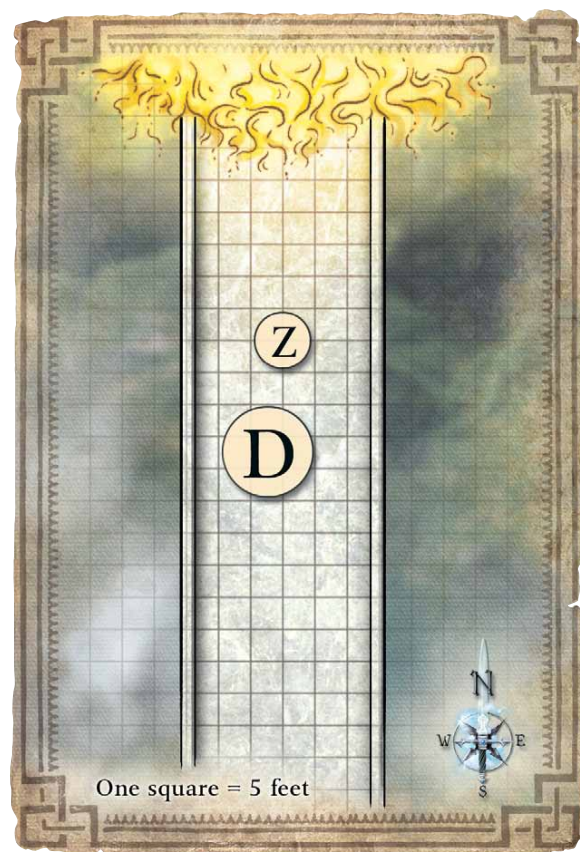
The dragon means to get through the golden curtain and the archangel isn't having it. If the dragon has Amyria, she's at grave risk, because Zachariel cares nothing for her. If she's not saved, she could very well die in the fight. Of course, interfering characters put themselves in the dragon's path.

Dakranad: The dragon restricts its attacks to claw attacks against Zachariel, knowing its radiant attacks are useless. Should two or more characters close, the dragon uses *frightful presence* and spends an action point to use *dimension strike* against stunned targets. The dragon withdraws from Zachariel to concentrate his attacks against the party,

using his *breath weapon* and *dimensional fury* to destroy the meddling adventurers.

If reduced to 200 hit points or less, Dakranad grows desperate. If he still has Amyria, he abandons the characters and renews his efforts against Zachariel, striking at the characters only if they attack him or try to snatch Amyria.

Zachariel: The angel's sole purpose is to prevent unlawful passage beyond the Bridge of al-Sihal. The angel attacks only characters entering its reach, but specifically focuses on the dragon. Zachariel cares nothing for the characters unless they attack it. In this case, the angel uses *excommunication* to remove troublesome enemies and *holy word* to keep dangerous opponents at bay. The angel is not above using *blazing*



arc and menacing presence to push characters from the bridge.

Retrieving Amyria and the Creation Spark:

The characters have several options for retrieving Amyria. A character adjacent to the dragon can use the escape action against the dragon's Fortitude or Reflex to wrench her free. Alternatively, if the characters manage to stun or bloody him, Dakranad drops Amyria at his feet. Once the dragon loses her, he works to snatch her again by using the grab action.

Stealing the Creation Spark requires a DC 37 (DC 27 if the dragon is stunned) Thievery check.

Zachariel	Level 28 Solo Soldier
Large immortal humanoid (angel)	XP 65,000
Initiative +22	Senses Perception +27
Dimensional Ward aura 3; creatures cannot use teleportation powers or effects to enter or exit squares inside the aura.	
HP 1,036; Bloodied 518	
AC 44; Fortitude 42, Reflex 38, Will 40	
Immune fear; Resist 20 fire, 30 radiant; Vulnerable see <i>arrow of fate</i>	
Saving Throws +5	
Speed 8, fly 16 (hover)	
Action Points 2	
⚔ Blazing Sword (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Radiant, Weapon Reach 2; +35 vs. AC; 2d6 + 10 damage plus 2d6 fire and radiant damage, and the target is slowed and marked until the end of Zachariel's next turn.	
⚡ Brilliant Rebuke (immediate reaction, when an adjacent enemy moves or shifts; at-will) ♦ Fire, Weapon Zachariel makes a blazing sword attack against the triggering enemy.	
✂ Excommunication (standard; recharges when an enemy hits Zachariel with a melee attack) ♦ Acid, Teleportation Ranged sight; +31 vs. Will; the target disappears into Carceri and is removed from play (save ends). The target is marooned on a bleak island lashed with acid rain, taking 20 acid damage each time it fails a saving throw to end the effect. <i>Aftereffect:</i> The target reappears in a square on the edge of the Zachariel's dimensional ward aura and is immobilized and knocked prone until the end of its next turn.	
⚡ Astral Fury (free, when first bloodied; encounter) ♦ Radiant, Zone Close burst 5; +31 vs. Fortitude; 3d6 + 9 radiant damage, and the target is blinded (save ends). <i>Effect:</i> The burst creates a zone of brilliant light that lasts until the end of the encounter. Zachariel's blazing sword attacks deal 2d6 extra radiant damage while he is within the zone.	

Getting Amyria Through the Curtain: Once Amyria gets the Creation Spark, her consciousness returns. She wants to slip through the curtain, but she can't while Zachariel blocks the way. The characters can deal with the archangel by stunning or otherwise incapacitating it or they might use the *arrow of fate*.

⚡ **Blazing Arc** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Fire, Radiant, Weapon**
Close burst 2; +35 vs. AC; 2d6 + 10 damage plus 2d6 fire and radiant damage, and the target is slowed and marked until the end of Zachariel's next turn.

⚡ **Holy Word** (minor; recharge ☞ ☞) ♦ **Thunder**
Close blast 3; +31 vs. Fortitude; 4d8 + 13 thunder damage, and the target is stunned until the end of Zachariel's next turn. *Aftereffect:* The target is dazed (save ends).

⚡ **Menacing Presence** (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ **Fear**
Close burst 3; targets creatures marked by Zachariel; +33 vs. Will; the target is pushed 3 squares and takes a -2 penalty to all attack rolls until the end of its next turn.

Angelic Presence (while not bloodied)

Any attack against Zachariel takes a -2 penalty to the attack roll.

Threatening Reach

Zachariel can make opportunity attacks against all enemies in his reach.

Arrow of Fate

Zachariel is particularly vulnerable to the *arrow of fate*. If fired from a longbow or shortbow or used as an improvised weapon, when hit Zachariel takes 250 points of damage and is stunned (save ends).

Alignment Unaligned

Languages Supernal

Skills Arcana +24, Diplomacy +26, History +24, Insight +27, Religion +24

Str 31 (+24)

Dex 23 (+20)

Wis 26 (+22)

Con 27 (+22)

Int 21 (+19)

Cha 24 (+21)

Equipment plate armor, greatsword

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Bright light. The golden curtain and the radiant sun fill the area with bright light.

Bridge: The bridge is impervious to all damage. A fall from the bridge sees the creature descend some 200 feet to land amid the lower mountain slopes. Such a fall deals 20d10 damage upon landing.

Golden Radiance: The golden light shining from the gateway loosens the soul's ties to the body. Mortal creatures lingering too close are subject to an attack. A character recognizes the danger the radiance poses with a successful DC 28 Religion check.

✧ Golden Radiance

The light bathes you, and you feel your soul struggling to be free.

Opportunity Action ♦ Divine

Trigger: A mortal creature starts its turn in a square containing golden radiance

Target: The triggering creature

Attack: +32 vs. Will

Hit: The target is dazed (save ends).

First Failed Saving Throw: The target is stunned (save ends) instead.

Second Failed Saving Throw: The character is pulled into the light unless stopped by the angel and moves onto a higher plane of existence (the character dies).

Treasure: Upon defeating the dragon, the adventurers discover that it carries parcels Q and R.

CONCLUSION

With the dragon dead, the creation seed in hand, and Amyria still alive, the dying deva approaches the archangel, but Zachariel denies her access. The angel refuses her because it believes she intends to subvert the proper order and consign the universe to play out the drama between gods that has happened before and shall happen again. The characters must convince the archangel that permitting Amyria to cross is the only way to avoid plunging the cosmos into a war that would rip the planes apart.

AN ARGUMENT FOR RESURRECTION

"I deny thee passage across the Bridge of al-Sihal."

Level: 28 (XP 26,000)

Complexity: 2 (requires 6 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Diplomacy, Heal, History, Religion, special

Secondary Skills: Arcana

Special: If the characters brandish the *arrow of fate* and Zachariel can see it, they earn 2 successes. This can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Arcana (DC 33): A character studying the *arrow of fate* discerns that it is particularly dangerous to Bahamut's enemies. This check opens up the Special option. Up to four characters can aid on this check. This skill earns no successes.

Diplomacy (DC 33): The character reminds Zachariel what's at stake if Tiamat wins and argues that Bahamut is the only way to halt the Chromatic Dragon's agenda. Up to four characters can aid on this check. This skill can earn a maximum of 4 successes.

Heal (DC 28): A successful Heal check reveals Amyria will not live much longer. Sharing this with the angel reveals her personal sacrifice to restore Bahamut to life. This check can earn a maximum of 1 success.

History (DC 28): The character recalls horrors performed in Tiamat's name, hoping to drive home the import of the characters' mission. A failed check also closes off future History checks during this skill challenge. This skill can earn a maximum of 2 successes.

Religion (DC 33): The character reinforces Bahamut's place in the cosmos, the good he has worked, and how the world will benefit by his return. This skill can earn a maximum of 4 successes.

Intimidate: The angel will not be intimidated. Each attempt results in a failure.

Success: The characters convince the archangel to let Amyria pass. See Concluding the Adventure on page 44.

Failure: Zachariel is unmoved by the party's entreaties and denies passage into the light. If Amyria would pass, the heroes must defeat the angel. ☹

About the Author

ROBERT J. SCHWALB works as a freelance designer for Wizards of the Coast. His recent credits include *Martial Power™*, *Draconomicon™: Chromatic Dragons*, and the *Forgotten Realms® Player's Guide*. Robert lives in Tennessee with his incredibly patient wife, Stacey, and his pride of fiendish werewolves, but is happiest when chained to his desk, toiling for his dark masters in Seattle.



“The Mithral King came into our domain, telling us of the cataclysmic visions that filled his mind. The other angels and I saw our god die, and watched our domain slowly crumble around us as we wandered listlessly. Tashkax gave us purpose, and we saw in him the knowledge, foresight, and strength of a god. We had hope once more that we had found a worthy master.”

—Tirlunel, servitor of Tashkax

ECOLOGY OF THE MITHRAL DRAGON

By Logan Bonner

illustrations by Sam Wood

HISTORY

With wide-reaching goals and the power to achieve them, mithral dragons have played a major part in shaping the history of the world and planes despite their relatively small numbers. Since mithrals care primarily about pursuing their own goals, they derive far more satisfaction in completing them than in receiving praise or fame for their deeds. Mithral dragons have been involved in major swings of power throughout history, but few know of their involvement. Even fewer know how, specifically, the dragons shaped these events. Except for scholars with knowledge of religion or the planes, few people in the world even know that mithral dragons exist.

ORIGINS OF MITHRAL DRAGONS

No one knows for sure which legend of the creation of dragons is true. To mithrals, the details aren't particularly important. The only part of draconic history that really matters to mithral dragons is that they were intended to be Io's chosen. The god's spirit speaks to them still, and they follow Io's charge with greater commitment than any other type of dragon.

Though they have an association with the Astral Sea, it's clear that mithrals haven't always lived there. During the early days of the War of Dragons, mithrals fought against the chromatic dragons and helped decide the course of many battles. Over the course of that war, the mithral dragons grew more and more dissatisfied, and their numbers in the world slowly dwindled. Many mithrals claim that they weren't truly mithral dragons until they had left worldly matters behind and begun to consider more important concepts.

CRUSADING MITHRAL DRAGONS

Since the world fell into darkness and the great bastions of civilization crumbled, mithral dragons have grown more obsessive. They seek to radically change the world. Most of them want to transform it into a place of law and order, but their ideals can blind them to the consequences of their plans.

Mithrals have raised armies or instigated conflicts in attempts to set things right. Most influence affairs from behind the scenes, although a rare few have made their presence more openly known. Mithrals mostly find that they can inspire greater faith and camaraderie in their armies through the use of charismatic servants and allies.

AVATARS OF PROPHECY

The visions mithral dragons receive make them superlative prophets. These visions of the future come (the mithral dragons believe) from the spirit of Io. Though the dragons might struggle to understand these sometimes-cryptic bursts of foresight, they never doubt their veracity. However, they also know that the actions of free-willed individuals—for good or ill—can affect the results of any vision, no matter how sure it might seem. This contradiction worries those who dare question the motives and wisdom of these powerful creatures.

Still, great prophets keep a close eye on mithral dragons. Some attempt to tell the future by watching the actions of mithrals, believing that anything one of these dragons considers important will be significant. Mithrals largely resent their role as harbingers for lesser prophets. They prefer to keep their secrets, but they don't want to waste time covering their tracks. When necessary, a devious mithral dragon intention-

THE KING OF KHOURADAN

One of the most famous mithral dragons in the history of the natural world, Aelmedrion hatched while the edifices of the empire of Nerath crumbled. He grew up regretting that he hadn't lived to see an empire of the world in its full glory, and full of disdain for the evils that plagued the land afterward.

Impetuous as a youth, Aelmedrion hunted down necromantic rituals in libraries throughout the Astral Sea. As the dragon and his followers enacted these rituals, the graves of Nerathi soldiers opened up, and their occupants walked the land. The dragon declared the foundation of a new empire: Khouradan. To prove his beneficence, he set the undead soldiers to work slaying bandits, dangerous beasts, and other fiends that had overrun the world, but he did not prepare for his enemies' reactions. The dragon's evil adversaries had no idea who was attacking them and struck back indiscriminately against innocent people, either out of anger or while attempting to evade the undead armies by any means necessary.

After years of chaos, Aelmedrion appeared and admitted his failure. He returned the dead to their graves and personally dealt with the few prominent evildoers he was aware of. The rest went into hiding, and Aelmedrion fled to the Astral Sea in shame. As one of the few mithral dragons to reveal itself, most people who are aware of mithral dragons know about them because of this rogue necromancer.

Mithral dragons are immortal, and no news of Aelmedrion's death has reached the world. As far as anyone knows, the dragon is still out there, plotting a way to accomplish his goals more successfully.

ally misleads prophets by taking actions unrelated to its true goal. Some mithrals seem to pursue this sort of game with almost as much fervor as they do their true goals and passions.

PHYSIOLOGY

Though exceptional among their kindred, mithral dragons share most of the same physical traits. They are more nimble, though, exhibiting the suppleness of their namesake metal.

THE INNER LIGHT

Mithral dragon blood, like that of other dragons, contains stores of elemental magic. However, these creatures also command the radiance of the Astral Sea. They have dwelled primarily in that realm since their birth as a species, and their connection to the energy of the plane has increased over the millennia. When young, a mithral's scales are highly reflective. In later years, light glows from between their scales at all times.

Astral light has become so ingrained in mithral dragons that it has altered their breath weapons. As elemental energy passes from the fundamentum to the upper stomach, much of it transforms into radiant energy. As more energy collects, a mithral dragon's chest and throat begin to glow. This glow fades when the dragon unleashes its scintillating breath weapon.

When a mithral dragon becomes enraged, the light glows more fiercely. Even the dragon's claws and eyes flash with light during combat.

TELEPORTATION

Born with an ability to briefly cross between planes, a mithral dragon confounds its enemies with evasive teleportation. When a mithral dragon prepares to

teleport, its wings transmute into curtains of radiant energy. With a flash of light, the dragon crosses between planes and reappears nearby. Typically, the dragon crosses through the Astral Sea and reappears surrounded by motes of astral light. If it's already in the Astral Sea, the dragon usually teleports through the Elemental Chaos, and re-emerges accompanied by a tide of flame, cascade of dust, or gust of wind.

PSYCHOLOGY

Since mithral dragons are powerful, incredibly intelligent, and often fight for good causes, few realize how thoroughly consumed with their own goals these dragons become. Mithral dragons can become obsessive and domineering. Though they're typically on the side of the just, they can be misled into doing evil. With their prophetic insights, they might also seem to be pursuing an evil agenda for a goal they believe is for the greater good (or their own good, which to many mithrals, is one and the same). Even when devoted to a good cause, mithral dragons disregard the destruction and danger innocent people might face due to their actions in pursuit of their goals.

The type of goals a mithral dragon seeks to achieve varies widely. The only constant is scope—mithral dragons think big, and they choose to take on tasks that will influence entire continents or planes. A mithral dragon's goal might lead to the destruction of a barony, the disappearance of an entire landmass, the death of a powerful deity or demon lord, or the start of a great war.

SUPERIORITY

Mithral dragons know they are more powerful than other dragons, and act accordingly. They carry dragonkind's reputation for arrogance to extremes, and



they admit inferiority to no one, save perhaps deities or the most powerful primordials. Some mithrals consider themselves infallible, and even those who will admit to a mistake must be presented with overwhelming evidence to do so. Consequently, it's nearly impossible to dissuade a mithral dragon from following a course of action on which it has decided. Its prescience, in this case, is often a liability. Mithral dragons often come to believe that because of their gift of prophecy, they know more than anyone else—and they are thus often shocked beyond belief when events do not transpire as they expect.

REPRODUCTION AND PARENTING

Since mithral dragons don't die naturally and have few enemies capable of killing them, reproduction isn't a priority. Most mithrals are too consumed with their goals to find mates or rear children, and only do so if they're certain the time spent will further their agendas.

Mithrals rarely spend time with other dragons, even their own kind, so finding a mate is often difficult. A mithral dragon that wants offspring needs to either convince a potential mate that the offspring will contribute to both dragons' goals or arrange some type of exchange, usually by helping that mate further its own plans in some fashion. Sometimes two mithrals come together to raise hatchlings out of some deeper connection, but such relationships are even more rare among these dragons than among other species of dragonkind.

A parent that trains its offspring to further its goals uses harsh demands and instills in its hatchlings a sense of purpose. The dragon does everything it can to ensure that its child shares its goals, but inevitably, the parent grows distracted and neglects its children, leaving the hatchlings to their own devices. When a mithral wyrmling leaves the nest, many times a parent won't notice for weeks or months. In many ways, this preserves a balance among the mithral dragons, as few of those dragons related by blood end up pursuing identical agendas because of this distance that begins at such an early age.

MITHRAL DRAGON PLOT THREADS

You might want to use a mithral dragon to reinforce a theme in your campaign. These creatures loom so large that introducing one nearly demands that it will have a major role in the story arc of your game. Some interesting plot threads involving mithral dragons include:

Tyranny: Even a dragon working toward a good cause can impose stifling oppression over regions it claims to safeguard. The PCs might be fighting to free people from a mithral dragon's rules and restrictions.

Mysterious Prophecy: If the heart of your campaign's story is shrouded in secrecy, the PCs might enlist the aid of a mithral dragon. They could seek foresight from the dragon's visions, or try to prevent the dragon from finding out parts of a prophecy that would bring it into conflict with them.

Protect the Bystanders: The broad, intricate plots of mithral dragons ripple through the planes. The repercussions of a mithral's actions might harm ordinary people or fracture the land. Even at low level, PCs can protect people from the fallout of a mithral's actions.

CULTURE

Solitary beings, mithral dragons usually speak only with creatures who are their peers in power, and only when they must. Mithrals need to amass influence and knowledge to accomplish their goals, so they seek out only those allies who can offer them something that will further their own plans. The common person is useless to a mithral dragon, and is of no consequence to the dragon.

RELIGION

As residents of the Astral Sea, all mithral dragons acknowledge the power of deities, and most revere deities, or at least take their influence into account. Mithral dragons don't really worship gods in the same way most people do. They're simply too proud to submit to anyone else's will. They treat the gods with respect—at least those deities who share the same philosophies as the mithrals—and sometimes seek their guidance. Even this level of submission is galling to most mithrals, and they're more likely to treat such an interaction as one peer seeking advice from another, not as a lesser being seeking guidance from a "higher power."

It's not uncommon for a mithral dragon to realize that its goals align with a deity's. A mithral dragon that becomes deeply involved with a religion is a powerful symbol of that deity's influence, and few deities turn away such an ally. If the dragon is confident in the god's trustworthiness, it will present itself as a representative of the deity, using the combined cachet of the god's name and its own to fulfill the desires and goals the two share.

Whether in service to a deity or not, all mithral dragons pay attention to those deities whose tenets fit their goals or those who directly oppose them. The knowledge gathered by followers of Ioun can be useful to mithral dragons, so many of them maintain a connection to that god. Evil or immoral mithral dragons might follow the tenets of Zehir, who can help them with schemes that involve assassination. Vecna appeals to mithrals that want to scheme in secrecy.

The draconic gods and mithral dragons share an especially complicated relationship. Visions flow into mithral dragons' minds from the fragmented will of the dead dragon progenitor god Io. Therefore, the dragons follow this distant ancestor more closely than either of the living deities who commonly attract draconic followers. Bahamut and Tiamat simply can't live up to the majestic power of their father, in the minds of mithral dragons. To most mithrals, Bahamut isn't fulfilling Io's will, and Tiamat has turned her back on everything noble or worthwhile among dragonkind to pursue material things.

MITHRAL PATRONS

Always looking for competent allies, mithral dragons frequently serve as patrons for powerful adventurers. The dragon might seek them out because they share similar views, or simply because the adventurers will do what the dragon wants as long as they're paid well. Mithral dragons prefer to give direct orders, so characters who serve them might not have as much autonomy as they'd like. The only problem with a mithral dragon's orders is that they're sometimes based on vague visions. This means the characters might be expected to get results, but without a clear direction on how to achieve them or a good picture of the external factors that affect their quest.

UNDERLINGS

Mithral dragons attract numerous followers, either because they share similar goals, the dragon offers payment, or simply due to the lure of associating with a creature of such immense power. Because of a mithral dragon's wisdom and presence, it typically expects obedience from its followers. Debate and dissent waste valuable time that could be spent furthering the dragon's goals.

A mithral dragon intimidates its followers, at a minimum, and some mithrals treat their underlings essentially like slaves. The distinction depends on the dragon's options. If it can find like-minded followers who will work gladly, it recruits them. If not, the mithral is not below using whatever methods of motivation will achieve results.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER DRAGONS

Only a hundred or so mithral dragons are known to live at any given time, and it's hard to find any ties that bind them to one another. Even those who are closely related don't feel any great connection.

Mithral dragons look down on other dragons, especially chromatics and those varieties of metallics that focus most of their time on the collection of treasure. To earn a mithral dragon's respect, a metallic dragon must align its behavior and goals as closely to those of the mithral as possible. A mithral understands the pursuit of an agenda, and respects other metallic dragons that devote their time and resources to a purpose.

KNOWLEDGE OF MITHRAL DRAGONS

ARCANA

DC 16: Mithral dragons receive visions of the future, which they claim come directly from the spirit of the long-dead dragon god Io.

DC 21: Many metallic dragons follow "Io's charge," believing that the dragon god created the dragons to serve as protectors and leaders of weaker creatures. Mithral dragons believe their power of prescience makes them uniquely suited to carry out Io's charge.

HISTORY

DC 16: Events that cause great upheaval sometimes stem from the actions of mithral dragons. Many legends tell of mithral dragons that pursued immense goals and achieved them against all odds. Usually, completing these goals made the world better and more orderly. But sometimes, death and war resulted as side effects of their actions.

RELIGION

DC 16: Mithral dragons frequently join forces with a deity and take on quests with a religious significance. They only do so if they find deities whose goals truly match their own.

DC 21: Any deity might draw mithral dragons as allies, but a few—such as Ioun and Zehir—attract more mithral dragons than others. Mithral dragons hate Tiamat, and many believe Bahamut has failed to live up to Io's legacy.

MITHRAL DISCIPLE MONSTER THEME

A monster theme (introduced in *Dungeon Master's Guide 2*) allows you to modify any monster to reflect the powerful creature it serves. Mithral dragon followers learn to invoke powers of foresight and teleportation similar to those exhibited by their patrons. Add one of the following powers to thematically tie your monsters to mithral dragons. A sample mithral disciple is provided for your use.

Skill Modifications: +2 bonus to Insight and Religion checks.

DIMENSION STRIKE

This power allows a skirmisher to become more potent or gives extra movement and devastating attacks to a soldier or brute.

† **Dimension Strike** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Teleportation**
This creature teleports 5 squares, makes a melee basic attack, teleports 5 squares, and makes a melee basic attack against a different target.

BLINDING LIGHT

This flash of radiance works best for monsters that want to hide, or that deal more damage with combat advantage. Other monsters, especially soldiers, can use the power to strike awe in their foes.

↔ **Blinding Light** (minor; encounter) ♦ **Teleportation**
Close burst 3; level + 3 vs. Reflex; the target is blinded until the end of this creature's next turn. *Effect:* This creature teleports 5 squares.

PROPHETIC DEFENSE

Any monster can make good use of this ability, but it works best for artillery and lurkers that don't already have good escape maneuvers.

† **Prophetic Defense** (immediate interrupt, when this creature is hit by an attack; encounter) ♦ **Teleportation**
This creature gains a +4 bonus to all defenses against the triggering attack. If the attack misses, this creature teleports 3 squares.

DOMAINS

To keep their privacy and peace, mithral dragons build or inhabit lairs in distant areas, primarily in the Astral Sea. They prefer places tied to prophecy or divine magic, and many of the most powerful mithrals dwell in the former realms of dead gods.

SAMPLE DOMAIN: OTRIOR'S BEACON

The adult mithral dragon Otrior maintains a lair within an earthberg in the Astral Sea. Tunnels wind through the massive rock and connect at vast, hollowed-out chambers.

ORRERY

Otrior's Beacon draws its name from the immense orrery that hangs in space over the earthberg on which Otrior's lair is built. The device glows brightly, collecting the ambient light of the Astral Sea and sending it out in intense beams. Otrior's followers created the fantastic device at her bequest. The orrery doesn't represent any physical place, but the motion of time and the interplay of events. Otrior stares at the

Mithral Disciple	Level 11 Soldier (Leader)
Deva Knight-Errant	
Medium immortal humanoid	XP 600
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +8
HP 111; Bloodied 55	
AC 27; Fortitude 24, Reflex 22, Will 22 (+1 to all defenses against bloodied enemies)	
Resist 10 necrotic, 10 radiant	
Speed 5	
⊕ Broadsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+18 vs. AC; 2d10 + 2 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the deva knight-errant's next turn.	
† Rejuvenating Smite (standard; recharges after hitting with a broadsword attack) ♦ Healing, Weapon	
+18 vs. AC; 2d10 + 2 damage, and the deva knight-errant regains hit points equal to half the damage dealt.	
↔ Blinding Light (minor; encounter) ♦ Teleportation	
Close burst 3; +14 vs. Reflex; the target is blinded until the end of the deva knight errant's next turn. <i>Effect:</i> This creature teleports 5 squares.	
↔ Martyr's Cry (standard; recharge Ⓢ) ♦ Implement, Psychic	
Close burst 3; targets enemies; +16 vs. Will; 2d6 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is marked (save ends).	
Inner Radiance ♦ Radiant	
Any attack a deva knight-errant makes can instead deal radiant damage. In addition, a knight-errant can take a -2 penalty to an attack roll to deal 4 extra radiant damage on the attack.	
Health Transfer (minor; encounter) ♦ Healing	
The deva knight-errant takes up to 25 damage, and one ally within 10 squares of it regains the same number of hit points. The knight-errant can then transfer one condition from the ally to itself.	
Memory of a Thousand Lifetimes (free, when the deva knight-errant makes an attack roll, a skill check, or an ability check and dislikes the result; encounter)	
The knight-errant adds 1d6 to the triggering roll.	
Alignment Good	Languages Common
Skills History +16, Insight +16, Religion +18	
Str 21 (+10)	Dex 10 (+5) Wis 16 (+8)
Con 15 (+7)	Int 18 (+9) Cha 18 (+9)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, broadsword, holy symbol	



orrery while meditating to enhance her visions. The beams reflecting from its surface point toward places of importance, but only Otrior can determine where the beams lead.

MEDITATION TOWER

One jutting spire serves as Otrior's place of peace and meditation. Only she or other fliers can reach the summit, so she regards it as a safe outlook. One of the orrery's light beams always shines on this point.

LAIR

Though Otrior spends most of her time within her meditation tower or giving orders and guidance to her followers, she retreats to her lair when she needs to contemplate a matter with no disturbances. This period is usually short—usually only a few days and never more than a couple of weeks—but vital to her decision-making process.

GARDENS

Verdant hanging gardens provide food for Otrior and all of her followers who live on the earthberg. The dragon has a unique diet consisting mostly of vegetables. Like any dragon, she occasionally craves meat. Those who anger her by interfering in her plans might find themselves brought to her domain and served up as a meal.

TUNNELS

The winding tunnels in the earthberg can easily accommodate a creature of Otrior's size, and any that had been too small were widened long ago. Hundreds of caverns, both small and large, branch off from the complex of tunnels. Otrior's servants have created a sustainable society within the earthberg.

CAMPAIGN ROLES FOR OTRIOR

Otrior rarely leaves her ivory tower, so the PCs will need to access the Astral Sea either through their own means or thanks to transport provided by the mithral dragon's servants. The PCs could encounter Otrior on friendly or unfriendly terms. This sidebar refers to the "Dragons in the World" section of *Draconomicon: Metallic Dragons* (pages 42–47).

Patron: Otrior might become a patron as the PCs adventure at higher levels. She's a guiding patron, giving advice while still keeping the full extent of her plans hidden.

Occasional Ally: This campaign role has Otrior popping up from time to time when the beams of astral light shine across the PCs' path.

Scenery: Otrior's Beacon might also work as an interesting locale in your game without having the dragon play much of a role in the events. The PCs might attend a summit of powerful planar leaders at this location, or they might come upon it after Otrior and her followers have abandoned it or been slaughtered by unknown forces.

OTRIOR'S PLANS

Dangerous artifacts and magical effects can wreak havoc with time and endanger the stability of the planes. Otrior's work has given her a deeper understanding of the forces that affect time and the future, and she takes it upon herself to guard what she sees as the correct course of the future. Most of her plans involve gathering lore about time manipulation or attempting to stop others from using magic that might bend the course of time.

The Time Wells: Each plane has a few time wells: places where the normal flow of time doesn't apply and hundreds of possible realities converge. Otrior seeks to find the location of these time wells and hide them from others. This plot can affect PCs of all tiers, depending on where the time wells are located and who searches for them. The PCs might end up playing alternate versions of themselves from other realities or times as the chronological stream warps around them.

The Lost Light: One of the lights from Otrior's orrery shines into an unexplored region she knows nothing about. Paragon or epic characters might sail off on an astral skill to follow the light to its destination. They might find a long-forgotten astral domain, hibernating primordial, immensely powerful artifact, or gateway to the Far Realm. The PCs might wonder if they've just finished a literal self-fulfilling prophecy. Would this place or object have been important in the course of the future if they'd never come to find it?

WORSHIP HALLS

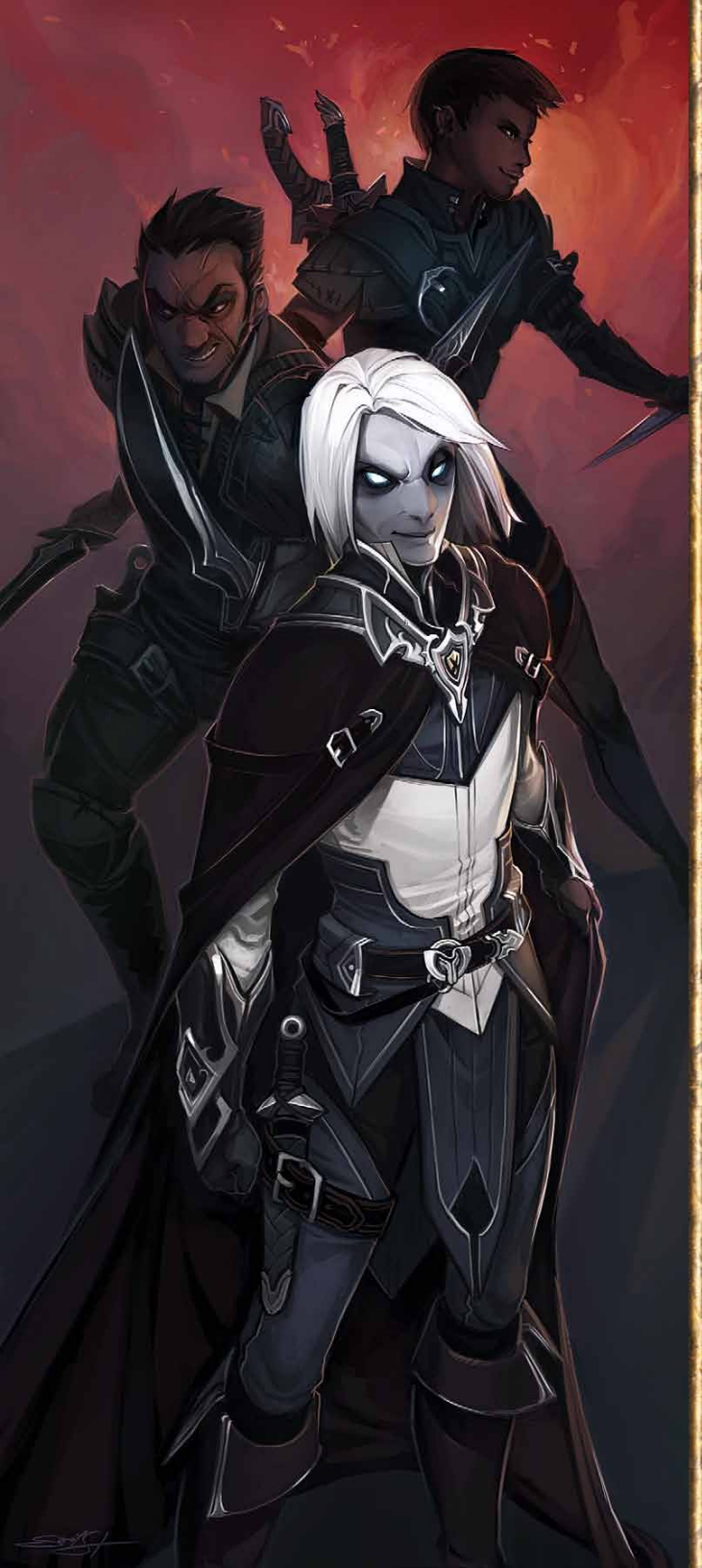
Otrior draws followers from many walks of life. All of them pursue scholarly endeavors, and many are religious. Halls throughout the earthberg allow Otrior's followers to worship almost any god. Gruumsh is a notable exception: Otrior harbors resentment against the destructive deity for reasons unknown.

LIBRARIES

One common element in every mithral dragon lair is some sort of library. These creatures always find use for tomes and scrolls, especially those with prophetic implications. Otrior's Beacon houses eight libraries, each with a tiny window tunnel that runs all the way to the surface of the earthberg. Light from the orrery shines into each library at different times, guiding the mithral dragon's decisions.

About the Author

Logan Bonner has worked on *D&D Miniatures*, *Forgotten Realms® Player's Guide*, *Adventurer's Vault™*, *Player's Handbook® 2*, and *Arcane Power™*. He has designed both familiars and alchemy, encouraging people to be both social and anti-social.



EXPLORE FAIRHAVEN

Agents and Enemies

by Chris Sims

illustrations by Sarah Stone

“Crown jewel of Galifar? Crown seat of Aundair? Yeah, I know that drivels. Galifar’s dead, mate, and I rule these streets. If you wanted white spires and crystal waters, you’d have stayed in a better ward or let the river carry you by. Now let’s get down to business, or you can hit the cobbles.”

Fairhaven is noted for its beauty, much like the rest of Aundair. But, as with any large mass of people, hidden evil has wormed its way through the community’s roots and weaves webs in Fairhaven’s highest places. Ill fortune or decisive action can bring wicked eyes down on the bold. For such worthies, even gentle and beautiful Fairhaven is a place of adventure. See *DUNGEON* #170 for more information on the city.

KREELO; GANG LORD

The Dark Dagger Gang—just bringing up the name is enough to cause faces to pale in some circles of Fairhaven. Others—separated from the city’s seedy side by wealth, privilege, or both—see the gang as a myth, sinister and perhaps a little glamorous. Little do these folk know that they might have rubbed elbows with the infamous leader of the gang, the changeling freebooter and assassin Kreele.

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Kreelo		Level 10 Elite Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger), changeling		XP 1,000
Initiative +14; Senses Perception +10; low-light vision		
HP 200; Bloodied 100		
AC 24; Fortitude 21, Reflex 23, Will 22		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed 6		
Action Points 1		
⚔ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+15 vs. AC; 2d4 + 7 damage.		
☞ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Ranged 6/12; +15 vs. AC; 2d4 + 7 damage.		
⚔/↗ Shapechanger's Flurry (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Kreelo makes two basic attacks. He can shift 1 square as a free action after each hit.		
⚔ Dull Minds (minor; recharge ⏳ ⏳ ⏳) ♦ Psychic		
Close burst 5; +12 vs. Will; the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against Kreelo, or -4 if the attack occurs when it is not the target's turn (save ends). If Kreelo hits a creature that is marking him with this attack, the mark ends and the target cannot mark Kreelo until the target saves.		
⚔ Steel Slipstream (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ Weapon		
Close blast 5; +15 vs. AC; 2d4 + 7 damage and slide 1. After all attacks are complete, Kreelo shifts to any square in the blast.		
Skirmish		
If Kreelo ends his move at least 4 squares from the square where he started the move, his attacks deal 1d8 extra damage until the start of his next turn.		
Change Shape (minor; at-will) ♦ Polymorph		
Kreelo can alter his physical form to take on the appearance of any Medium humanoid, including a unique individual.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven	
Skills Bluff +16, Insight +14, Stealth +15, Thievery +15		
Str 17 (+8)	Dex 21 (+10)	Wis 11 (+5)
Con 12 (+6)	Int 11 (+5)	Cha 18 (+9)
Equipment leather armor, 4 daggers		

Kreelo loves his life of crime, and he has honed his shapechanging skills to a higher level than typical changelings to support his passion. One might think wealth and freedom are the obvious allure, but Kreelo likes the deception and the rush more than

the money. He enjoys feeling smarter and stronger than those he and his gang abuse and kill. He savors walking among those who would have him bound in chains or killed on the spot if they only knew the truth about who stood beside them.

Like their master, the gang members are bold in their criminal toil. No dishonest deed is beyond them, and they defy the authorities through bribery, threats, and an occasional murder. However, the Dark Daggers are careful in their targets and their travels. The upper crust has little to fear from the gang, and no member willingly reveals the gang base in the abandoned Silver Flame cathedral.

KREELO IN COMBAT

Kreelo always sizes up the opposition before any conflict, and he usually engages in some amusing (to him, at least) banter before resorting to combat. He doesn't mind being in the thick of a brawl, but he likes to keep mobile for the sake of skirmish. Relying overmuch on his ability to *dull minds* for this purpose, he saves *steel slipstream* for when he's in a jam without the aid of his psychic power. Otherwise, he has to fall back to shifting away from tough threats.

KREELO'S PERSONAL GANG

Kreelo rarely travels without an entourage, and he never travels in a recognizable form (unless he's assumed the mantle of the Nightstalker). Even in his lair, he has friends close at hand.

Level 10 Encounter (XP 2,800)

- ♦ Kreelo
- ♦ 2 human knife fighters (level 7 elite skirmisher; *Monster Manual* 2, page 151)
- ♦ 1 half-elf con artist (level 7 controller; *Monster Manual* 2, page 138)

LEGEND OF THE NIGHTSTALKER

Only a trusted few know Kreelo has taken the identity of the infamous killer of unknown race and gender known as the Nightstalker. This legendary assassin, who usually kills targets in public while they have guards, has terrorized Aundair and nearby regions for decades longer than Kreelo has been alive. Kreelo took the role from the former leader of the Dark Daggers after learning the slayer's art. That former leader, a changeling named Mara, lives in luxury in her mansion within Fairhaven. Kreelo still visits her, which could prove to be a weakness for him and Mara.

Kreelo might carry a magical weapon—*Nightstalker's poniard*. (If Kreelo doesn't have this or another magic dagger, make sure he has enough daggers to throw a few in combat and remain armed in melee.) In its early days, the gang took its name from this blade's appearance. Since then, the knife has passed to each leader of the Dark Daggers. If outsiders acquire it, surviving gang members, a potential new leader among them, are likely to try to track the blade down.

Nightstalker's Poniard +3 Level 14

Forged of dark metal, its hilt wrapped in black leather, this slender-bladed knife seems perfect for nighttime wetwork.

Weapon: Dagger 21,000 gp

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +3d6 damage, or +3d12 if the attack was made with combat advantage.

Power (Daily ♦ Teleportation): Move Action. You teleport your speed to a space adjacent to an enemy, and gain combat advantage against that enemy with your next attack with this weapon made before the end of your next turn.

- ♦ 1 half-orc scarthane (level 7 brute; *Monster Manual* 2, page 140)

TORVEN, THE AGELESS

The Cult of Life is well known among Fairhaven's citizens. On the surface, it is a group—with branches across Khorvaire—that reveres life and the dream of worldly immortality. It celebrates the eternal divine at the heart of all beings, and promotes self-reliance and self-exploration. Blood is seen as a symbol of life, the heart as the seat of the soul.

At its own heart—most of its members would be shocked to learn—the cult is a sect of the Blood of Vol. Some priests and initiates with dark leanings find their way into the cult's inner circles. At the group's center, within the Sovereign Ward's dark deeps, an

immortal oversees the Fairhaven group and influences its goals continent-wide. Undying in one of the only ways the cult offers immortality, this leader is a vampire.

Torven was once an influential member of House Medani. He faked his death to seize immortality. Now he maintains secret connections with his former kin, as well as a wider network across Khorvaire.

TORVEN IN COMBAT

Torven likes to attack from a high place, then toy with his enemies, mocking them physically and verbally. He prides himself on his perceptiveness and his



precognitive abilities, so his taunts and jests focus on information he gains from Perception, Insight, and *gainful portents*. Torven enjoys moving rapidly among his foes with *reaping run*, then escaping to a place that is difficult to reach—often by climbing. He prefers targets he has personally mesmerized for combat advantage, but he's not so vain as to eschew other advantageous targets. Preferring not to become tied down by his feeding habits, Torven likes to use his remaining actions for *blood drain*.

Torven "the Ageless" Level 18 Elite Skirmisher d'Medani

Medium natural humanoid (undead), half-elf vampire XP 4,000

Initiative +17 **Senses** Perception +16; darkvision; see also *Medani scion*

Life Thief aura 5; Torven can detect living creatures in the aura as if he had blindsight. Enemies take a -2 penalty to death saving throws within the aura.

HP 344; **Bloodied** 172

Regeneration 10 (if Torven is exposed to direct sunlight or takes radiant damage, regeneration does not function until the end of his next turn)

AC 32; **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 32; see also *gainful portents*

Immune blinded, disease, fear, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic **Saving Throws** +2

Speed 8, climb 6 (spider climb)

Action Points 1

⬆ **Lifedrinking Short Sword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon** +23 vs. AC; 2d6 + 6 damage, ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends), and Torven gains 5 temporary hit points.

⬆ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

Torven makes two melee basic attacks. He can shift 2 squares before, between, or after the attacks.

⬆ **Blood Drain** (standard; requires combat advantage; recharges when an adjacent creature becomes bloodied) ♦ **Weapon** +21 vs. Fortitude; 3d12 + 5 damage, the target is weakened (save ends), and Torven regains 10 hit points.

⬅ **Mesmerize** (minor; recharge ⬢) ♦ **Charm, Gaze**

Close blast 3; +20 vs. Will; the target is dazed (save ends).

Gainful Portents (minor; recharges when Torven uses an action point)

Torven gains +2 to defenses and combat advantage against all enemies until the end of his next turn. If Torven is marked, the mark ends.

Ghost Mist Form (standard; sustain minor; encounter) ♦ **Polymorph**

Torven becomes insubstantial and gains phasing until the end of his next turn. Torven cannot attack while in this form. He can make Stealth checks in this form without any cover or concealment. He can end the effect as a minor action, and can remain in this state for 1 hour.

Combat Advantage

Torven deals 2d6 extra damage when he hits a creature he has combat advantage against.

Medani Scion

Torven treats any Perception check die result lower than 10 as 10. He ignores cover and concealment, but not superior cover or total concealment.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Draconic, Elven
Skills Athletics +14, Bluff +21, Insight +18, Stealth +20, Thievery +20

Str 11 (+9) **Dex** 22 (+15) **Wis** 15 (+11)

Con 20 (+14) **Int** 14 (+11) **Cha** 25 (+16)

Equipment leather armor, 2 short swords

TORVEN'S INNER CIRCLE

Within his sanctum, powerful undead and otherworldly creatures guard Torven. His personal chambers contain creatures disguised as statuary or that lurk unseen in dark recesses. Torven also has personal servants to whom he has granted eternal life—vampire spawn life-thieves—but these can withstand far less punishment than their master.

Vampire Spawn Life-Thief		Level 16 Minion Brute
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 350
Initiative +14	Senses Perception +11 (+16 against living creatures); darkvision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 29; Fortitude 28, Reflex 29, Will 27		
Immune disease, poison; Resist 10 necrotic		
Speed 7, climb 4 (spider climb)		
⬇ Bite (standard, at-will)		
+19 vs. AC; 10 damage, and ongoing 3 necrotic damage (save ends). A creature already taking ongoing necrotic damage instead increases its current ongoing damage by 2.		
⬇ Steal Life (immediate interrupt, when reduced to 0 hp; encounter)		
+17 vs. Fortitude; 10 necrotic damage, and the vampire spawn life-thief regains 1 hp.		
Destroyed by Sunlight		
If the vampire spawn life-thief ends the turn in direct sunlight, it burns to ash and is destroyed.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common	
Str 18 (+12)	Dex 20 (+13)	Wis 14 (+10)
Con 15 (+10)	Int 11 (+8)	Cha 17 (+11)

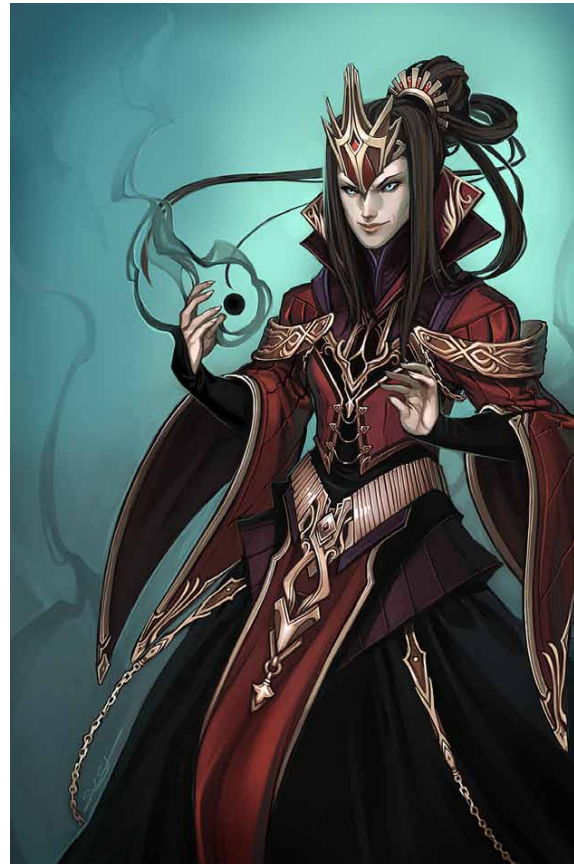
Level 19 Encounter (XP 12,550)

- ◆ Torven, the Ageless
- ◆ 5 vampire spawn life-thieves
- ◆ 2 wrath spirits (level 17 soldier; *Open Grave*, page 151)
- ◆ 1 battle guardian (level 17 controller; *Monster Manual*, page 149)
- ◆ 1 nabassu gargoyle (level 18 lurker; *Monster Manual*, page 115)

COUNTESS TESYN IR'LANTAR

The charming countess of the ir'Lantar family has a way of making those around her at ease, unless she is put out. Her reputation as an arcanist of raw talent has served to keep her family safe. This is how it should be and always has been.

History states that the ir'Lantars are old blood in Fairhaven, but few accounts of how the family rose to count among the nobility are told. They descend from a noble knight, Kael Lantar, who rose up after the fall of the lord he served. That lord is largely forgotten, the



Countess Tesyn ir'Lantar Level 15 Elite Artillery	
Medium natural humanoid, half-elf XP 2,400	
Initiative +7	Senses Perception +12
Entropic Veil aura 5; enemies within the aura lower their resist values by 10.	
HP 232; Bloodied 116; see also <i>blood power</i>	
AC 26; Fortitude 27, Reflex 26, Will 28	
Resist 10 variable (2/encounter)	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6	
Action Points 1	
⬇ Demonclaw Dagger (standard; at-will) ◆ Poison, Weapon	
+18 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 damage, and the target takes 15 poison damage if it ends its turn within 5 squares of the Countess (save ends).	
⊗ Rotfall (standard; at-will) ◆ Necrotic	
Area burst 1 within 10; +19 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
✱ Storm Maw (standard; encounter) ◆ Thunder, Lightning	
Area burst 2 within 10; +19 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 6 lightning damage plus 1d8 + 6 thunder damage, and the target slides 1 square toward the burst's origin square. <i>Miss</i> : Half damage.	
✱ Demon Shackles (standard; encounter) ◆ Cold, Fire, Zone	
Area burst 1 within 10; +19 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 6 fire damage. <i>Effect</i> : A zone of spent heat springs up in the area. If a creature leaves the zone or is inside the countess's aura before the end of the countess's next turn, that creature takes 10 cold damage.	
Blood Power (immediate reaction, when a bloodied enemy within 5 squares takes damage; recharges when first bloodied)	
The countess regains the use of <i>demon shackles</i> or <i>storm maw</i> .	
Deceptive Veil (minor; at-will) ◆ Illusion	
The countess can disguise herself to appear as any Medium humanoid. A successful Insight check (DC 28) pierces the disguise.	
Demon Seed (immediate reaction, when the countess drops an enemy to 0 hp; at-will)	
Two carnage demon savager minions appear in unoccupied squares adjacent to the countess. The triggering enemy takes a -4 penalty to death saving throws while these minions live.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Abyssal, Common, Primordial
Skills Arcana +16, Bluff +18, Insight +14	
Str 9 (+6)	Dex 11 (+7) Wis 11 (+7)
Con 20 (+12)	Int 18 (+11) Cha 22 (+13)
Equipment robes, dagger	

infamy of his deeds making him unworthy of remembrance. Since then, though, the ir'Lantars have ever ascended on "noble" deeds until they sat just to the right of the royal throne.

Everything the family has gained, from the dark root of Kael Lantar, is due to its ties to the Lords of Dust. The thick veneer of nobility and civil service hides a rotten core. Each and every member, servants included, is cruel and calculating at heart, but careful in deed.

Countess Tesyn is no different. To outsiders, her life is beyond reproach. The only complaint some nobles have is that she is a widow and has never remarried. Those who discover her connection to any crimes are skilled indeed, more so if they ever manage to cut through the layers of obfuscation she has erected to confront her. Few survive that long, and none have survived Tesyn's ire unleashed.

COUNTESS IR'LANTAR IN COMBAT

Tesyn is bold in combat, eager to bring the chaos swirling around her to bear against her enemies. Balancing this desire with her need to launch area attacks at will, she uses her encounter powers as quickly as they become relevant. Then she counts on the spiritual energy unleashed from wounded enemies to recharge her powers. Her dark pact allows her to sense when her adversaries are near death, and her allies allow her to finish off the nearly dead and bring more fiends into the world.

COUNTESS IR'LANTAR'S ENTOURAGE

The countess keeps her personal retinue of bodyguards close about her and her late husband's mother, Ilsya. The city's rumormongers tell that the soldiers are

Carnage Demon Savager		Level 15 Minion Brute
Medium elemental magical beast (demon)		XP –
Initiative +12	Senses Perception +4	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion; see also <i>bloodlust</i> .		
AC 27; Fortitude 29, Reflex 26, Will 26		
Resist 10 variable (2/encounter)		
Speed 6		
⚔ Claw (standard; at-will)		
+18 vs. AC; 12 damage.		
Bloodlust (when the carnage demon savager drops to 0 hp adjacent to a bloodied enemy)		
The carnage demon makes a claw attack against an adjacent bloodied enemy.		
Carnage		
The carnage demon savager gains a +1 bonus to melee attack rolls if it has one or more allies adjacent to its target, or +3 if one of these allies is another carnage demon.		
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal	
Str 24 (+14)	Dex 18 (+11)	Wis 18 (+11)
Con 23 (+13)	Int 7 (+5)	Cha 9 (+6)

expert hand-to-hand fighters, capable of rending flesh with their bare hands. Ilsya is herself an enigmatic figure, said to be a seer or enchantress of some power who advises the countess and runs some of Tesyn's personal errands. The truth is too awful for anyone to have even imagined it.

Level 16 Encounter (XP 7,000)

- ◆ Countess Tesyn ir'Lantar
- ◆ Ilsya (night hag, level 14 lurker; *Monster Manual*, page 151)
- ◆ 2 rakshasa warriors (level 15 soldier; *Monster Manual*, page 216)
- ◆ 1 rakshasa archer (level 15 artillery; *Monster Manual*, page 216)

IMRE LEVALLE, WAYFINDER TRUSTEE

Imre is a trustee of the Wayfinder Foundation, and the foundation's Curator of Acquisitions. A vocal advocate for exploration and research, he works to obtain items and knowledge for the foundation. He then catalogs and stores items, and he circulates what he learns.

Unfortunately, Imre is also a double agent for the infamous Aurum as part of its Gold Concord. He works inside the foundation to exploit it for Aurum gain and to make sure he has influence, preferably ultimate influence, when Lord Boroman ir'Dayne dies. That's an eventuality Imre is also working hard to ensure, and he has a number of other trustees on his side.

CUSTOMIZING IMRE

Imre has a lot of influence and a lot of keys to rich storage vaults. He could become the target of other unscrupulous individuals or even unscrupulous PCs. Rather than being evil, he could be an unaligned unwitting pawn of the Aurum or some other organization. Even as presented, he offers a lot of roleplaying opportunities. An evil Imre might try to dupe the PCs into thinking they've fingered the wrong guy, and he might even try this bluffing tactic during a battle.

The encounter below is just one possibility. Inside the foundation headquarters, any number of creatures or persons might aid Imre. The PCs might have to do some fast-talking while a battle rages. Outside the headquarters, Imre has numerous humanoid allies. You can use any that make sense to you, from dwarf agents of the Aurum to hobgoblin mercenaries.

Imre Levalle		Level 9 Elite Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf		XP 800
Initiative +10 Senses Perception +11; low-light vision		
HP 190; Bloodied 95		
AC 25; Fortitude 21, Reflex 22, Will 20		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed 5; see also <i>dwarven pursuit</i>		
Action Points 1		
⚔ Battleaxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison, Weapon		
+16 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage, and the target is marked and slowed (save ends both). <i>First Failed Saving Throw:</i> Ongoing 5 poison damage, and the target is slowed (save ends both).		
⚔/🎯 Throwing Hammer (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Ranged 5/10; +16 vs. AC; 2d6 + 3 damage, and the target is knocked prone.		
⚔ Dwarven Tempest Footwork (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Imre makes a melee attack with his axe and another with his throwing hammer. After the attacks, any target hit at least once slides 1 square.		
⚔ Parrying Counterstrike (opportunity action, when an enemy marked by Imre leaves a square adjacent to him or makes an attack that doesn't include him; at will) ♦ Weapon		
Imre makes a battleaxe attack against the triggering enemy.		
Dwarven Pursuit (move; at-will)		
Imre can shift 2 squares, but he must end this movement adjacent to an enemy.		
Stand Your Ground		
When an effect forces a dwarf to move—through a pull, a push, or a slide—the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Goblin	
Skills Bluff +9, Dungeoneering +11, History +10, Insight +10, Thievery +13		
Str 17 (+7)	Dex 18 (+8)	Wis 14 (+6)
Con 15 (+6)	Int 12 (+5)	Cha 10 (+4)
Equipment leather armor, battleaxe, 3 throwing hammers, eight gold rings (10 gp each), key-ring with dozens of keys, thieves' tools		



Imre embezzles, steals relics and replaces them with copies, and covertly obstructs the Aurum's competition. He uses the auspices of his office to arrange expeditions that benefit the Aurum and to arrange foundation memberships for his agents. He also takes bribes to arrange memberships, but he's very careful to work through intermediaries in that racket.

IMPROVING IMRE WITH TREASURE

Consider giving Imre a +1 *throwing hammer* and other items, such as a *healing potion*, if your treasure distribution allows it. Having a magic throwing hammer allows Imre to throw at a distant foe without losing his advantage in melee, since the magic hammer returns to him. Counting the hammer as worth only its *residium* value (72 gp) in your treasure allotment is probably the best bet even if the PCs end up keeping it. A little extra money in the PCs' pockets won't hurt the game. And if Imre uses his potion, he can have another in storage or a hidden stash of gold for the PCs to find after a fight to make up the difference.

IMRE IN COMBAT

If driven to fight, Imre throws himself at his foes, standing among them and dealing death with his weapons. Although he appears lightly armored, he is an expert at parrying incoming attacks. He is also adept at forcing his enemies into poor tactical positions while maneuvering himself into better ones, to which ends he uses *dwarven tempest footwork* and *dwarven pursuit*.

IMRE'S OFFICE

In Imre's workplace, where numerous relics await study and cataloging, are creatures that resemble objects until they awaken to protect their master. He also keeps his exotic pet hawk, Tuor, with him here.

Level 8 Encounter (XP 1,950)

- ◆ Imre Levalle
- ◆ Tuor, frost hawk (level 7 skirmisher; *Monster Manual 2*, page 142)
- ◆ 2 iron cobras (level 6 skirmisher; *Monster Manual*, page 157)
- ◆ 1 flameskull (level 8 artillery; *Monster Manual*, page 109)

RIVER SMUGGLERS

Although the river elves are a colorful part of Fairhaven life, and most are as law abiding as most citizens, river life has its dark side. River elves are fantastic guides and expert shippers, but both traits make them ideal smugglers. Illicit goods come into Fairhaven through the river ports, and the bulk of that trade flows through half-elven hands. Finding a smuggling ring and shutting it down can be part of just about any heroic adventure.

For most smugglers, the money and thrills are the goal. Such individuals like to think they've outwitted the authorities, and live for the challenge of escaping near capture again and again. But other river elves are hardened criminals without a qualm about bringing just about anything into Fairhaven if the price or incentive is right. Still others have political motivations. These reasons can come from dragonmarked houses such as House Lyrandar, governments such as Thrane's, or even organizations such as the Ashbound or other Eldeen loyalists.

Half-Elf Smuggler	Level 6 Minion Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid	XP 63
Initiative +8	Senses Perception +4; low-light vision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 20; Fortitude 17, Reflex 19, Will 18	
Speed 6	
⚔ Short Sword (standard; at-will)	
+11 vs. AC; 5 damage.	
Skirmish	
If a half-elf smuggler ends his or her move at least 4 squares from the square where he or she started the move, the smuggler's attacks deal 3 extra damage until the start of his or her next turn.	
Dock Runner	
A half-elf smuggler ignores difficult terrain when shifting.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Elven
Str 12 (+4)	Dex 17 (+6) Wis 12 (+4)
Con 13 (+4)	Int 10 (+3) Cha 14 (+5)

Level 6 Encounter (XP 1,365)

- ◆ 1 half-elf bandit captain (Level 6 skirmisher [leader]; *Monster Manual 2*, page 138)
- ◆ 1 gnome mistwalker (Level 5 skirmisher; *Monster Manual 2*, page 128)
- ◆ 1 longtooth hunter (Level 6 soldier; *Monster Manual*, page 233)
- ◆ 1 half-elf con artist (Level 7 controller; *Monster Manual 2*, page 138)
- ◆ 5 half-elf smugglers (see above)

This encounter might represent a typical smuggling operation's inner circle or that of an Eldeen-sympathizer ring. A smuggling group operating for Thrane could have a human cavalier (level 7 soldier [leader]; *Monster Manual 2*, page 144) in place of the con artist, and perhaps, a couple warforged soldiers (level 4 soldier; *Monster Manual*, page 261) in place of the longtooth hunter. This increases the XP value by 100. 🌀

About the Author

Chris Sims is a bipedal creature of mutable form so that he is able to shape himself into the likeness of any humanoid creature from 4 feet to 8 feet tall which he has observed. Having become a double for a person, he may attempt to do away with that victim and assume its place. He has contributed to titles such as *Dungeon Master's Guide*®, *Monster Manual*®, *Monster Manual 2*, *Eberron*® Campaign Guide, and he has worked on *D&D Insider*™ articles too numerous to mention. He lairs with his "wife" in the Seattle exurb of Covington, and he makes all saving throws as if he were a 10th-level fighting man.



*“With a crack o’ bone and a widenin’ grin,
Obmi collects his stake in the inn.
Bones might mend and pride can heal
But don’t renege on a Bronzeknuckle deal.”*

*—“The Bronzeknuckle Deal,”
a popular shanty in the foreign quarter.*

CAMPAIGN WORKBOOK: THE BRONZEKNUCKLE BROTHERS

*By Stephen Radney-MacFarland
illustration by Tyler Jacobson*

HEROIC

1-10

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Each point of light casts shadows. Behind the protective walls of the greatest cities, monsters prey on the weak and the defenseless. Some are magical experiments gone awry, servants of dark cults, or even horrors from the world's darkest corners, which slip through the cracks of fortifications and past the steely gaze of sentinels.

More insidious are those monsters hiding in plain sight: dark hearts clad in the velvet and silks of civilization, but ready to do malice for greed or cruelty's sake. The dwarven siblings known as the Bronzeknuckle Brothers are monsters of this stripe.

To most, this dwarven trio merely owns a number of successful foreign quarter businesses, including dice halls, breweries, warehouses, taverns, and a coalition of caravan companies that trade with far-flung dwarven halls. But these businesses are just a veneer for the Bronzeknuckle's true ventures: protection rackets, smuggling, illicit loans, graft, intimidation, and murder.

ENCOUNTERING THE BROTHERS

Most adventurers first encounter the Bronzeknuckle Brothers without realizing it. Strange occurrences in a back alley near in or near the foreign quarter might lead to the characters foiling the assassination of a local tax collector or finding crates of dwarven contraband. Maybe the characters witness a group of Bronzeknuckle associates eliciting protection money from a tavern owner or alchemist acquaintance and decide to come to their friend's aid. Whatever the case, the first time the characters cross the brothers is likely through a Bronzeknuckle underling. While the

brothers employ muscle of all races—even goblins—their favorites are dwarf bolters and dwarf hammers (*Monster Manual* 97). A number of their dwarven soldiers are the sons and daughters of cousins or business partners from their homeland. A select few are so close to the brothers that news of their assault or death provokes plans for personal vengeance.

While the brothers are cruel and vicious, they are not mindless brutes. Before confronting an enemy head on, they take pains to find out all they can about them. In their reconnoitering they take particular note of their enemy's friends, relatives, and loved ones. They strike where they find weakness, and they strike where it hurts the most, hoping to provoke a rash response from their foes.

If their plans are successful, any personal showdown with the Bronzeknuckle Brothers takes the form of an ambush. And while each of the brothers is a formidable foe in his own right, they share the strong bond of family and clan loyalty common among dwarves. They will try to fight together and with backup from the many rungs of their criminal organization.

BRONZEKNUCKLE BROTHERS LORE

Streetwise DC 8: *The Bronzeknuckle brothers are a close trio of tough-as-nails dwarf brothers who run a coalition of caravan companies. They also own other businesses in and around the foreign quarter. They are known for their shrewd and no-nonsense business dealings. And if stories are to be believed, they can become downright violent when crossed.*

WHAT FOREIGN QUARTER?

Throughout this article, the Bronzeknuckle Brothers are described as operating in a foreign quarter. Foreign quarter is shorthand for “wherever you need it to be,” while giving a hint at the type of neighborhood or section of the city the Bronzeknuckle Brothers work best.

For example, if you are running your game in the Eberron city of Sharn, the foreign quarter can be Holdfast or Wroann's Gate, and the legitimate business that the Bronzeknuckles run involves trade with the Mror Holds, maybe bypassing House Orim or House Kundarak.

If your campaign is set in Waterdeep, the foreign quarter can be the Trades Ward, with the brothers' far-flung dwarven contacts being either Citadel Adbar or far-off Earthheart.

Streetwise DC 14: *The brothers are not above playing a little rough to get what they want. Their competition has a habit of skipping town or being found dead under suspicious circumstance when they work counter to Bronzeknuckle interests.*

Streetwise DC 19: *The local authorities usually overlook the Bronzeknuckle's shady dealings because they've been bribed, blackmailed, or threatened. Almost half of the foreign quarter pays protection to the trio, which only really affords protection from the brothers themselves.*

Arcana DC 19: *The brother named Myst is covered with green glowing tattoos that are star-pact symbols usually used to bind a Far Realm presence within a vessel.*

THE BRONZEKNUCKLE BROTHERS

Though each of the Bronzeknuckle brothers is wicked and self-serving, they do share the strong bond of dwarven family. If one of the brothers falls, another will endeavor to take revenge on whoever dared attack the Bronzeknuckle clan.

“LORD” OBMI BRONZEKNUCKLE

“I know you think this must hurt something awful. You’re wrong. I’ll show you something awful.”

Tough as a mountain, canny as a fox, and possessing a sadistic cruelty usually reserved for duergar, Obmi is the eldest, as well as the mind and heart of the Bronzeknuckle brothers.

Though his red hair is going gray at the temples and at his beard just under the lip, Obmi is spry and sharp. Though always smiling (even when twisting arms and breaking bones) and often charming, the dwarf’s gray eyes are hard and cold, hinting at his true nature.

Obmi carries himself like a dwarven lord, and when he is in a foul mood he makes those around him address him as such, even his brothers. The title and whatever story of noble heritage he entertains in his sick mind is a delusion on Obmi’s part. Truth be told, the Bronzeknuckle family is as lowborn as a dwarven clan can be.

ADRIK BRONZEKNUCKLE

“I really hope you make this hard on yourself. A true craftsman loves a challenge.”

The youngest of the Bronzeknuckle brothers, the cold and distant Adrik loves to bring pain to those weaker than him. He sees himself as a craftsman or artist, but in reality he is nothing more than a psychopath with morbid compulsions.

Clad in stylishly cut black leathers, Adrik is meticulous in his appearance and hygiene. He shaves his head with ritualistic zeal each morning, and braids his beard and decorates it with gems. Each finger is adorned with a gem-studded ring, which he places in a very specific order based on his own twisted logic.

When crossed or his sick needs are denied, Adrik can fly into a rage that only a stern look or word from Obmi can calm.

Obmi Bronzeknuckle	Level 9 Elite Brute (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf	XP 800
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +7; low-light vision
Bronzeknuckle’s Largess aura 2; all enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to attack dwarf allies in the aura, and allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to saving throws.	
HP 238 Bloodied 119	
AC 21; Fortitude 24, Reflex 19, Will 21	
Saving Throw +2 (+7 against poison)	
Speed 5	
Action Points 1	
⚔ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+12 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage.	
⚡ Thundering Hammer (standard; at-will) ♦ Thunder, Weapon	
Ranged 5/10; +12 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 thunder damage, and the target is deafened (save ends) and pushed 2 squares.	
M Obmi’s Double Attack (standard; at-will)	
Obmi can make a <i>dagger</i> attack and a <i>thundering hammer</i> attack, each attack against a different enemy.	
Obmi’s Wrath (immediate reaction when an adjacent enemy makes an attack that does not include Obmi; at-will)	
Obmi makes a <i>thundering hammer</i> attack against the target.	
Faster Than He Looks (minor; encounter)	
Obmi shifts his speed.	
Stand Your Ground	
When an effect forces a dwarf to move—through a pull, a push, or a slide—the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Dwarven, Giant
Skills Bluff +11, Insight +12, Streetwise +11	
Str 15 (+6)	Dex 14 (+6) Wis 17 (+7)
Con 19 (+8)	Int 13 (+5) Cha 15 (+6)
Equipment chainmail, dagger, throwing hammer	

Adrik Bronzeknuckle	Level 7 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf	XP 300
Initiative +10	Senses Perception +5; low-light vision
HP 81; Bloodied 40	
AC 21; Fortitude 19, Reflex 21, Will 18	
Saving Throw +5 against poison	
Speed 5	
⚔ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+12 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 damage.	
⚡ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 5/10; +12 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 damage.	
⚔ Murderous Slice (standard; recharge ☞ ☞) ♦ Weapon	
+10 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 5 damage and the target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
Slippery Dodge (move; recharges when Adrik starts his turn adjacent to more than one enemy) ♦ Weapon	
Adrik ends any mark condition affecting him and then shifts 3 squares.	
Combat Advantage	
Adrik deals 1d6 extra damage against any target he has combat advantage against.	
Stand Your Ground	
When an effect forces a dwarf to move—through a pull, a push, or a slide—the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Dwarven, Giant
Skills Acrobatics +13, Intimidate +10, Thievery +13	
Str 15 (+5)	Dex 20 (+8) Wis 14 (+5)
Con 17 (+6)	Int 13 (+4) Cha 14 (+5)
Equipment leather armor, 4 daggers	

EKUD “MYST” BRONZEKNUCKLE

“You know what the stars tell me? That your life is over.”

Every family has that “strange” sibling, and few dwarves are stranger than Myst. Born with the name Ekud, something mysterious warped the brother’s personality at an early age. He claims to be possessed by a powerful spirit called Myst, and prefers to be called by the spirit’s name.

Myst is cold and uncaring. He sees most life around him as inconsequential. The only anchor he has to the world are his brothers, who he still seems to care about.

Not even Myst’s brothers are sure if the warlock’s talk about being possessed by a being from beyond the pale is a pretension or real. Only Obmi dares to call him Ekud, and then only when the Bronzeknuckle leaders is angry with his spell-slinging brother.

Ekud “Myst” Bronzeknuckle		Level 8 Controller
Medium natural humanoid, dwarf		XP 250
Initiative +6		Senses Perception +6; low-light vision
HP 91; Bloodied 45		
AC 22; Fortitude 20, Reflex 19, Will 22		
Saving Throw +5 against poison		
Speed 5		
⚔ Rod of Acamar (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic, Weapon		
+13 vs. AC; 1d6 +4 necrotic damage.		
✈ Dire Radiance (standard; at-will) ♦ Fear, Implement, Radiant		
Ranged 10; +12 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 4 radiant damage, and if the target moves closer to Ekud on its next turn it takes 1d6 + 4 damage.		
⚡ Acamar’s Tide (standard; recharge [⚡]) ♦ Implement, Necrotic		
Close burst 2; targets enemies; +12 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 4 necrotic damage and the target is pushed 4 squares.		
⚡ Death Breaks the Prison (when Ekud is dropped to 0 hit points) ♦ Necrotic, Psychic		
Close burst 3; +12 vs. Will; 1d10 necrotic damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).		
Curse of Ulban (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ Charm		
Must target the nearest enemy; no attack roll; the curse of Ulban lasts until the end of the encounter; whenever Ekud hits a cursed target with an attack, that target takes 1d6 extra damage and is slowed until the end of Ekud’s next turn.		
Stand Your Ground		
When an effect forces a dwarf to move—through a pull, a push, or a slide—the dwarf moves 1 square less than the effect specifies. When an attack would knock the dwarf prone, the dwarf can roll a saving throw to avoid falling prone.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Dwarven, Giant	
Str 15 (+6)	Dex 14 (+6)	Wis 15 (+6)
Con 19 (+8)	Int 16 (+7)	Cha 16 (+7)
Equipment robes, rod of acamar (rod and club)		

MYST

When Ekud is killed, the creature that is Myst is released from his flesh. It lashes out at all those nearby (as described by the *death breaks the prison* power). A character under the effect of the ongoing psychic damage might get some hints as to the entity’s true nature. If that character is a star pact warlock, Myst might decide to hang around and teach the character forbidden Far Realms knowledge, or even manifest itself as a familiar of some sort (*Arcane Power* 137-141).

About the Author

Born on a stormy Christmas day, in our nation’s capital, during the Nixon administration, the stars were definitely wrong when Stephen Radney-MacFarland came screaming into the world. Spending most of his impressionable years as a vagabond and ne’re-do-well, Stephen eventually settled in the Northwest to waste his life on roleplaying games.

He teaches a class on roleplaying design for the Art Institute of Seattle, molding the minds of young and upcoming designers. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

ADVENTURING ARMIES

By Robert J. Schwalb

illustrations by
Patrick Thomas Parnell



On a wintry day in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, the schools closed their doors due to snow. We played D&D. Before I knew it, I had twenty people gathered in what I had thought was a spacious room. It was loud, it was unruly, it was madness, it was awesome!

Over the next few pages, we'll look at some of the larger concerns arising from big groups, offer practical solutions for keeping things on course, and a few mechanical tips to make your job easier.

On a wintry day in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, the city's youth enjoyed a welcome break from education's demands after the schools closed their doors due to snow. Though the county deemed the roads too unsafe for the buses to run, a little snow and ice never stopped us dutiful gamers from gathering in the chilly "finished" attic in my mother's house. On this particular day, everyone who had ever played DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® on my Tuesday night games converged for the chance to sling spells and swing swords at the monstrous hordes populating my fantasy world. Six players grew to ten, ten players grew to fifteen, and before I knew it, I had twenty people gathered in what I had thought was a spacious room. It was loud, it was unruly, it was madness, but it was awesome. We played D&D—the characters slew monsters, found magic, and once more averted a terrible doom awaiting the world. In the twenty years since, a handful of those folk still play in my games, the rest having moved on to different friends, different towns, and different lives, but I still look back at that game as my greatest achievement in my Dungeon Mastering career.

No one needs to run a game for twenty players; heck, a dozen is too many. Running games for large groups creates a whole host of unique challenges, and most, if not all, groups lose players from attrition, from being overshadowed, or from reality's necessary intrusions. But you can feel something powerful in a successful game featuring seven or more players, and when the group works together, lending their experience, smarts, and skill into a harmonious whole, the game play is every bit as rewarding and engaging as that which you can find in more modest-sized parties. And, in my estimation, it can be better.

I still run large groups: My Sunday night game averages eight players, and my Wednesday night game, if everyone shows, is about the same. While I enjoy running games for any number of players, I'm at my best when seven invested gamers sit around the game table, each adding their stories to the epic tale we weave. Over the next few pages, we'll look at some of the larger concerns arising from big groups, offer practical solutions for keeping things on course, and a few mechanical tips to make your job easier.

MANAGING LARGE PARTIES

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS plays best with five characters. At this size, each role has representation with minimal overlap. Each player has a chance to shine in the spotlight, and the DM can manage the number of monsters faced with ease, keep the treasure consistent, and have the game play remain fast-paced and action-filled. Each player added to the group beyond the core five extends a combat's length, shrinks the spotlight time for each player, and makes the game harder to run as more monsters join the fight, as more treasure has to be distributed, and as more characters tax the DM's ability to manage them.

TIME AND GROUP SIZE

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* suggests that when you are running a normal game, allocate about 1 hour for each combat encounter. In a typical encounter, each player including the DM gets about 10 minutes to take actions, ask questions, roleplay, and manage resources. More characters means more monsters, so a combat encounter's time increases by about 10 to 15 minutes per player added. In a seven- or eight-person group, you can expect a combat to last upward of an hour and a half and maybe as long as 2 hours for a "boss fight" or capstone encounter. If you allocate 4 hours a week to your campaign, you're going to get about two encounters in for each game session. It'll take you over two and a half years to complete a 1st-level to 30th-level campaign. Or, if like me, you game once every two weeks, your campaign won't finish for five years.

ACCELERATED COMBAT

Large parties mean slow combats and slow combats can drag a campaign out far longer than you or your players want. Shortcuts can wrap up a combat faster without sacrificing the parts that make D&D so much fun to play.

Roll Dice Together: It's not rocket science, but if you roll your damage dice at the same time as your attack roll, you cut down on unnecessary steps. Better still, when you know you're attacking multiple targets with one attack, roll all the d20s at once—assign a different colored die to each target when it matters.

Use Counters: Between conditions, ongoing effects, conjured or summoned monsters, zones, and a variety of other important tidbits, there's a lot for a DM to manage. Most groups use some method for tracking these elements, such as by using chits, magnetic disks, counters, tokens, and so on. Using these might feel a bit strange at the start, but once you get the hang of it, it becomes second nature. Be sure to assign a different kind of token for each condition, give some to each player whose character has a marking mechanism, and have a few spares for summoned critters, zone marking, lighting, and other effects bound to crop up in a combat.

Monster Assortment: Whether you are scratch-building a new encounter or scaling up an existing encounter, how you add monsters to the fight affects how long the combat takes. A battle with a solo could take hours, while a fight with twenty minions might take a fraction of the time. Brutes and soldiers take more time to dispatch than do lurkers, artillery, and skirmishers.

When building encounters, you might reduce the number of opponents by substituting an elite for two monsters so there are fewer foes to face. You might

populate the battlefield with a ton of minions so that the players can move through them right away. Aside from minions and solos, the fewer monsters present, the more resources the characters can devote to their enemies, so you should also consider building encounters with higher-level foes to keep the numbers down when possible. Consider dropping the defenses by a point or two on these higher-level foes from time to time. Too many opponents who are higher level than your PCs can lead to more misses and less fun. Damage and attack bonuses aren't usually as much of an issue, since a larger group has more hit points to absorb the bigger attacks.

Projected Victory: When a battle starts, the characters have an advantage—they have action points, a broader range of powers, and a good mix of roles to handle just about any sort of enemy. After a few rounds of fighting, the outcome is clear, such as when just a few enemies remain on the battlefield. Nothing is wrong with having the surviving monsters flee (never to be seen again) or surrender (opening up roleplaying opportunities). You can even just narrate the final moments of a typical fight.

Toward the end of most fights, players don't waste daily powers or action points to finish off the stragglers, and since they get their encounters back at the end of a short rest, the characters are still burning through their resources at the same rate. By abbreviating the combats in this way, you can move through the unimportant combats fast and allow the adventurers to reach the key fights without investing too much time in the ones that matter the least.

This said, never abbreviate fights where the characters stand a chance of losing—it's in these final moments where players have the most on the line. Faced with life or death, a player can use his or her

most powerful attacks, chewing up resources they might need for future encounters. In the end, use your judgment, but you don't have to play through a battle until every enemy is reduced to 0 hit points.

ACCELERATED ADVANCEMENT

Large groups slow progress and the rate at which characters earn levels climbs from about once every three sessions to once every four or even five sessions. Many groups are fine with the slower advancement, but if you want to move through the levels rapidly, you have a couple of options.

Smaller Scope: Tightening the campaign's scope allows you to move from one series to the next. Rather than building or running a complete campaign from 1st level to 30th, consider focusing on just a single tier and then wrapping up the campaign when the characters attain the highest level within the tier. Building a campaign in this way gives you an endpoint with the option to continue later, but it also gives the players the chance to play different characters and draw from new sourcebooks and options as the game matures.

It also helps you craft a particular style of story. A pure heroic tier campaign is good for grittier, low(er) magic adventures. A paragon tier campaign allows the characters to play the parts of the world's movers and shakers, to involve themselves in the highest levels of politics, to take on powerful enemies, and to affect the campaign setting in meaningful ways. Finally, an epic campaign sees the characters mixing it up with demon lords, ancient dragons, and even the gods. What the characters achieve might help guide the world through an uncertain future or could have consequences throughout the planes.

Rapid Advancement: Although restricting the campaign's scope does make a campaign with a larger

group more manageable, it bypasses many of the experiences of growth and development players enjoy. Rather than close off tiers, you might increase the rates by which characters advance.

The easiest way to do this is to double the amount of experience points you reward for encounters. You don't have to do this all the time, but when you feel the game starts lagging, a few boosts to the XP rewards helps move the game through the doldrums. When using this method in a published adventure, you need to trim out about half of the encounters, or scale up the encounters to account for the party's higher level.

Quests: Your best tool for running games featuring six or more players is the quest. Completing a quest earns the party XP as if it had completed an encounter of its level. Nothing is stopping you, however, from granting more XP for a quest, incorporating multiple quests within an adventure, or from using minor quests to pad the XP so you have to run fewer encounters for the characters to attain their next level.

Multiple major quests are easy to hide in an adventure. If you space their attainment throughout the plot, the big boosts to XP are less conspicuous. Minor quests are tricky for large groups since you often need to come up with something for each character. You might chunk players' minor quests together, giving parts of the group attainable goals within the adventure's story. Doing so encourages teamwork and their resolution can often occur outside of a combat encounter.

THE SPOTLIGHT

Almost every player enjoys the moment when his or her character's presence in the game has meaning and contributes to the story in an important way. The

spotlight shines on players who come up with great ideas and who roleplay well, but it can also highlight players who are adept in battle and use class features, powers, or skills in a cool and fun ways. In a normal game, players can all carve out time for their characters, but the opportunities to shine become fewer and farther between when players compete against seven others.

One way to look at a roleplaying experience is to regard it as a "pleasure pie." When it comes down to it, people play games for enjoyment. If they have no enjoyment, they aren't going to keep playing. When you have a DM and five players, you can slice the pleasure pie into equal parts, each person getting a good taste and coming away full, but with an appetite for more next time. Each person added to the group reduces the size of individual portions, and if one player hogs a bigger piece, odds are some leave hungry. Equality is not going to be possible in large games and that's okay. What you need to do though is make sure if someone goes without a piece one game, he or she receives an extra helping the next time you play.

INDIVIDUALITY

Another challenge with the spotlight comes from overlapping character concepts. Players uncomfortable with challenging character designs might default to obvious builds. When two players take on the same roles, the party could have identical or nearly identical adventurers. Of course, as more classes and races appear, players have more options for filling roles, so the likelihood of character similarities diminishes with each new sourcebook and article released. Characters can also gain individuality by using regional backgrounds from the *Forgotten Realms® Player's Guide*

and backgrounds described in the *Player's Handbook 2*. Using them helps make two axe-wielding dwarf guardian fighters distinct. To encourage character diversity, broaden the players' options by recommending build choices from the power sourcebooks, new classes from *Player's Guides*, such as the swordmage and artificer, and new rules from new *Player's Handbooks*.

Diversity in character choice helps keep the players' interest and makes each character stand out with their particular talents adding to the larger group. Encourage players to experiment with new classes, races, and mechanics, and you'll never find your games populated by character clones.

CHUNKING PLAYERS

One good way to manage the spotlight is to shine it on several characters at once. Rather than carve up the session into tiny stages for each player, provide opportunity for players to work together and thus share the light. Say you have two characters in your game both trained in History. Instead of individual checks to see who recalls the information, have the characters work together by researching in a library, making contacts in their community, or exploring a few ruins. Add complexity to the basic check by incorporating a skill challenge or presenting different opportunities for using the skills.

This method works well in dungeon environments and combats. Two characters trained in Thievery can tackle just about any trap, especially if it requires a skill challenge to bypass. Two defenders might work together to give these characters the time they need to defeat the trap, unlock a door, or solve a puzzle. It's not hard to spotlight characters during game play, and once you are in the habit of doing it, it becomes almost second nature.

ONE SPOTLIGHT, ONE SESSION

When it doesn't make sense to chunk players, you can always fall back to the one spotlight per session technique. Obviously, a player who has to wait seven sessions before his or her next chance to shine is not going to be your player for long. So if you feel a player doesn't have a chance to shine during the current game, be sure to make a special effort to help this character come to the fore during the next game.

OFFSTAGE SPOTLIGHT

When it's impossible to give everyone a moment in the game, offstage spotlight is the next best thing. Just because the game session ends doesn't mean the game has to be over until next time you play. You can build a message board, establish a wiki, or even just exchange emails. Roleplaying scenarios between the characters and NPCs you control, as well as setting up investigation and world-building opportunities, can all take place outside of the gaming session, and the players involved in these opportunities have their chance to contribute even if overshadowed during the game.

SUSTAINED INTEREST

A common problem plaguing large groups is keeping the players interested. Casualties in a campaign are common—players drop out all the time and for a variety of reasons, many of which you have no control over. Casualties might reduce the group size to more manageable numbers, but if you can't sustain interest because of the things you can control, you might find your once too-large group becomes far too small.



BE A GOOD DM

Read the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. You might be a veteran of four editions, but you can still find helpful advice in this sourcebook to remind you of your bad habits, and it can offer better methods than the ones you're using. Being a good DM takes practice and you always have to work at it. You're not going to run a stellar game session every time, and you're bound to run a few bad ones too. Keep working at it, and as long as your players are having a good time, you're doing your job right.

"SECONDARY ROLES"

Even the best DMs have trouble keeping everyone's focus and attention. When the action centers on another player, the rest wait, patiently, and after a few minutes, their attention might drift. Tangents carry conversations away from the game as players whisper about football, movies, woes, and anything else more interesting than just twiddling thumbs. Most times, these little distractions are fine, but if left to grow, they can cause trouble.

A good way to sustain the players' interest is to assign each one a secondary role. A secondary role

gives the player something to do aside from showing up, throwing dice, killing monsters, and occasionally roleplaying. Don't hand the accountant role to just any player. Some gamers have enough on their plates already and have a hard time keeping track of powers and their dice. Giving a secondary role to a player who doesn't need it isn't just going to fail, but it fails spectacularly. Offer secondary roles to those players who have mastered the game, need something to do between turns, or are hungry for a bigger part. What follows are some possible secondary roles.

Accountant: This player maintains and manages the party's resources. The player keeps track of the gold found, gold spent on consumables and rituals, important treasures, and promised rewards for completing quests.

Cartographer: There's not a lot of need these days for players to map out dungeon corridors on graph paper. For most groups, this process has gone the way of the dinosaur. Instead of being the keeper of useless dungeon maps, the cartographer keeps track of places the group travels, important NPCs they meet, and what dungeons they've explored.

Historian: The historian fills a similar role as the cartographer; he or she keeps up with the party's progress in the game world. Where this role differs is that the historian also keeps up with the world's past, maintains information about legends and history, and collects cool and useful tidbits about the campaign setting.

Fixer: The fixer is the problem solver and the player who looks up the rules when they're in question. The fixer can help characters if they have a mechanical question and might be the team's strategic advisor.

The Face: The face is something of a party leader and spokesperson. This player might be the one who takes point during negotiations or might communicate party decisions. A face is the player who keeps up with the order of march, group positioning, the means of travel, orders for watching the camp, and all the smaller details that keep a party functioning.

Tactical Leader: The tactical leader is the player who keeps the table in order during a combat. This player can offer advice about tactics if asked, suggest possible courses, or help players who seem to be struggling. A tactical leader is not always the party leader (if the party has one), but he or she is the one with combat expertise.

Strike Team Leader: A strike team leader is a player who takes on and leads a particular task—sneaking around, disabling traps, researching, and interrogating prisoners. The strike team leader takes point on these tasks during a skill challenge. He or she is the expert on a specific subject and lends his or her expertise when the situation demands.

BROWNIE POINTS

In previous editions of *D&D*, the great equalizer was the experience award. Players who attended the game session gained XP and those who didn't went without it. A DM might give out XP for good ideas, excellent roleplaying, or cool tactical decisions. Experience points could help DMs sustain player focus in a game provided all players had equal chances to earn them.

Now, the amount of XP you award is determined by completing encounters, succeeding on skill challenges, completing minor quests, and completing major quests. Since XP comes from these specific sources and since DMs should apply experience awards to all characters, handing out

XP as an incentive is problematic. You have other options, however.

One possibility is to take the XP the characters might earn from minor quests and instead gather the XP in a separate pool. Whenever a player recalls a useful fact about the campaign, portrays his or her character in an impressive and appropriate way, or comes up with a strategy to help the party overcome an encounter or skill challenge, you can hand out the minor quest award. Once a player earns the reward, that player can't grab another minor quest award until next level, thus putting the burden on other players to play well and stay involved in the game. Moreover, since you're dividing these XP awards between the entire party, individually they are small enough not to skew the advantage in their direction too much and reduce the risk of gaining so many extra experience points the party level eclipses the encounters they have yet to face.

NUTS AND BOLTS

Managing a large group of players might be challenging by itself, but the game behind the DM's screen has its own difficulties.

INFORMATION

The larger the group, the broader the spectrum of characters present. Unless the party has a great deal of overlap between the classes, odds are, many more classes see representation. With diverse classes come diverse powers, feats, and skills, specifically knowledge and monster knowledge skills such as History and Dungeoneering. What you might very well find is that you have few secrets from a large group. You might have an expert on every subject,

from Arcana to Religion, and many characters might have access to the same skills, giving them a greater chance at uncovering a monster's resistances and vulnerabilities, or a useful fact about a historical tidbit or something helpful toward sorting out a thorny problem.

Being faced with this sort of "brain" power might seem intimidating, but it makes sense to have a couple of experts putting their heads together to find a way around or through a problem. Whenever you call for a History check and the table erupts in eight different checks, you'll find that the experience is not only loud, but the players turn up a success every time.

With so many players, you might just bypass the whole rolling process by keeping up with the characters' passive knowledge results. Just sketch out a chart on a sheet of paper or on a spreadsheet: Whenever the game comes to place where the players might need to make a knowledge check for their characters, consult your chart. For each character trained in the skill, add +2 to the passive result. If the number is high enough, give the players the information and move on with the encounter.

COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

Running combat encounters is easier now than it was before, but even as DM-friendly as the game has become, a large group, especially when the numbers fluctuate between six and eight players, presents all sorts of challenges.

SCALING

Every published combat encounter expects five players in your group. In theory, you need to adjust the XP budgeted for the encounter by reducing the number of monsters of the encounter's level by one for each

character less than the ones present, or add one monster of the encounter's level for each player over five.

For encounters where you have a monster whose level is the same as the encounter, this works fine, but not all encounters are built this way. Take "The Goblin Warren" fight in "Rescue at Rivenroar," *Dungeon* #156. As written, the encounter is listed as level 1 and is worth 500 XP. None of the monsters is level 1, so scaling the encounter up is not just a matter of adding another warm body for the characters to kill. Should you add another level 1 monster, add four level 1 minions, or do nothing? How you scale up an encounter depends on the encounter itself. By adding creatures appropriate to the opponent assortment, you can both present a good challenge for the group and keep things simple on your end.

SCALING TO THEME

Every encounter has a theme. It might be an ambush, a frontal assault, a boss fight, or something else. The tactics information reveals the encounter's nature in broad strokes, but examining the creature assortment can also give you a clue if the tactics are simple. If you're in doubt about an encounter's theme, look at the monster assortment. The creatures' roles reveal a lot about how you should scale a fight. If there's artillery present, you might throw in an extra artillery monster. Likewise, if the combat features minions, you can add more minions.

Artillery: Several artillery monsters in one fight suggest an ambush. These critters are fragile when drawn into melee, so you need something to slow a horde of characters from reaching them before the artillery has had a chance to dish out some damage. Consider adding brutes or soldiers.

Brute: An encounter with many brutes is a slugfest. The characters are in for a haul, pounding their way through foes with high hit points and high damage. Adding too many brutes is a good way to increase the casualty rate in your group, so for every brute you add, consider adding a skirmisher, artillery, or lurker.

Controller: You won't find many rooms filled with controllers since these monsters often require more brain power to run. However, an encounter featuring even one controller can shape the rest of the battle. There might be more soldiers and brutes to keep the characters from reaching the controller. Consider adding extra soldiers or brutes, but remember that the more characters the controller has to face, the less effective the controller becomes. So, as a good rule of thumb, have one controller for every three or so characters. To scale an encounter featuring three brutes and one controller, you should add a second controller for six characters. For seven characters, you might add an extra controller and an extra brute.

(Leader): Though not a role by itself, a creature with the leader tag is important since it's boosting its boys or keeping them on their feet. If the leader heals, adding another leader can drag out the fight and consume your party's resources. Add them sparingly, about one for every 3-1/2 characters. So if you have six characters facing an encounter with a leader, use something other than a leader.

Minions: A room full of minions is a "slaughter-fest." The characters can hack through the room with ease. The best solution here is to add more minions. In fact, if you're ever in doubt, just add minions.

Skirmisher: Skirmishers mean the encounter expects the bad guys to move around a lot. A brute or soldier works like a magnet for the characters,

keeping their attention fixed on the big scary monsters while the smaller enemies zip in and out, chipping away at the party's resources.

Soldier: Although different from brutes, soldiers eat up the fight in much the same way. Instead of buckets filled with hit points, they have high ACs and often good defenses too, making the characters waste precious attacks. Since they're harder to hit, adding more soldiers is not always the best choice. For every soldier or brute you add to the mix, a lurker, artillery, or even a skirmisher could all be good additions.

Elite: An elite monster is often the centerpiece of the fight and deserves the extra attention. You need to keep a balance between making sure the elite lives long enough to be a credible threat, but not so tough it wipes out the group. If a fight consists of two elites for five characters, add minions or a lurker. If it's one elite and support troops, add another elite if your group has seven or eight players.

Solo: The only way you ever want to throw another solo into an encounter is if you have ten players, and even then, it's a bad idea. Adding an elite to a solo fight is also super-nasty and it can result in a TPK (total party kill). So when you need to scale up a fight with a solo, minions are best. The characters might focus on them first and thus free you up to do all the nasty stuff with the solo. Or the characters might ignore the minions, giving you extra opportunities to flank defenders and reach softer characters such as strikers and controllers.

SCALING THE BATTLEFIELD

Big groups need more room to work. A confined space prevents characters from participating and can interfere with the most interesting powers on both sides of the screen. With six players, you don't have to adjust

the battlefield much if at all, but for seven or more players, you need to increase the size so everyone has a chance to move around. As a rule of thumb, add 1 square to every dimension for each player present beyond six. So an 8-by-8 room would become a 10-by-10 room for seven players or a 12-by-12 room for eight players.

NONCOMBAT ENCOUNTERS

Combat offers the greatest challenges for running a large group, but even outside the battlefield, a large group can find ways to test you. More players results in more trained skills and diverse rituals to help the group move to the next set of encounters, which helps them overcome noncombat obstacles with ease. Greater access to skills reduces the difficulty a skill challenge presents, while a large menu of rituals tends to see groups burning through resources (in other words, gold and goods).

SKILL CHALLENGES

A typical skill challenge for a party of four to six players tests a variety of skills and the best ones find things for each player to do, whether it's aiding another ally or tackling the problem from a different direction. When the party navigates a skill challenge, they earn XP as if they had defeated a monster of the challenge's level for each point of the challenge's complexity. While scaling encounters can often mean adding more monsters, scaling skill challenges lacks the same outward expansion.

Modify Complexity: The most obvious way to modify a skill challenge for a larger group is to increase the complexity. Each raise in complexity means the characters must gather two extra successes. If you have seven or more players, consider

raising the complexity by one to account for the extra skill checks at the party's disposal.

Under most circumstances, complexity modification works just fine, but be aware that the amount of experience points the party earns is lower since it's divided between more players. You can compensate for this by adjusting future combat encounters or by inserting additional skill challenges later in the adventure to help the group catch up.

Increased Difficulty: Another way to offset the larger group is to increase the skill check DCs. Doing so accounts for the larger number of aid another attempts inflating the skill check results beyond their expected numbers, and it keeps the challenge appropriate for extra players. As a rule of thumb, raise the DC for one primary skill check by 2 for each player above five.

Parallel Challenges: Increasing the DCs and the challenge's complexity are suitable solutions, but you take risks when you monkey with the challenge's mechanics. Increasing the DCs means the characters have a greater chance for failure. Increase the complexity by too much, and you have to add extra skills or you reduce the entire enterprise to an exercise of dice rolling.

So rather than alter the skill challenge's mechanics, consider running skill challenges involving only part of the group or running parallel skill challenges. A skill challenge designed for just a few players can be resolved without trouble and, more importantly, gives those players the spotlight. The whole group receives the XP reward, but success or failure rests in the hands of just the participating characters. For example, two or three characters might prowl the streets in search of clues and information, while the

rest stay behind to care for a diseased comrade, drink at the bar, or go shopping for supplies.

The other option is to run parallel challenges. In this model, you'd run two separate but related challenges, each testing the skill sets of different themed characters. For example, characters faced with a trapped door might split their efforts. One group interrogates a prisoner to find out what is beyond the portal and the other works to disable the trap on the door. Both challenges relate to the door, but involve different skill groups, different sorts of characters, and different information as the reward.

RESOURCES AND REWARDS

General equipment, consumables, and rituals are the coin purse's bane. Most gaming groups don't bother keeping up with ammunition, food, water, and other mundane and expendable resources, assuming the initial cost is enough to carry the characters through the life of a campaign. But consumables and rituals can chew through cash faster than a ravenous rust monster demolishes swords in an armory.

If you're using the parcel system for treasure distribution, then each character added to the group adds a magic item parcel. While this does allow more characters to have magic items than what a typical group of five might have, it also means the party has fewer coins to spread among them since the coin, gems, and goods never increase. This means fewer resources are available to invest in ritual ingredients, fewer consumable magic items are available for those adventurers who need them the most, and the characters have less chance to invest in vehicles, mounts, and other nonmagic item commodities.

In a way, the treasure system corrects the imbalance since characters can sell or disenchant magic

items for cash or *residuum*, and though the exchange is low, there is enough to power a few rituals and purchase disposable items if needed. However, players, especially at low levels, are not so eager to convert a useful item into a couple of spare healing potions.

One solution to this complex problem is to first identify if it's even a problem at all. Many groups can live without the extra coin and might prefer the extra magic items. If they need the coin, though, correcting the imbalance is as simple as substituting a coin parcel for the extra magic item parcel the group would gain. This should be an issue only for groups with seven or more players. Replace the "n + 1" level magic item gained for seven characters with an equal amount of coin. So, for a 1st-level party, you'd replace the extra 2nd-level item with 520 gp. If the group decides, they can split the coin evenly among the members or invest the gold into a magic item of their choosing for one of the players that went without one.

MAGIC ITEM DENSITY

Another challenge related to resources is the sheer number of magic items present in the adventuring group. In a five-player group, every level, one player goes without a magic item, so by the start of 6th level, each player should have four magic items. Each player added above five decreases the frequency in which a player must go without, so a particular character is skipped once every six levels in a six-person group, once every seven levels for a seven-person group, and once every eight levels for an eight-person group. More magic items per character increases the party's overall power.

For most groups, this isn't a problem, but when you think about how a larger group already has advantages over a smaller group—more leaders, more

opportunities for strikers to spike their damage, more control effects, more defenders to contain skirmishers and lurkers, extra magic items takes existing advantages and magnifies them. Sure, players like gaining magic items, but you might find the characters are less challenged in combats than they otherwise would be.

If this becomes a problem, you are well within your rights as a Dungeon Master to forgo parcels, replace magic items with coin, consumable items, or rituals, or use parcels to grant the party mounts and vehicles. You might also consider combining parcels into property such as castles or lands, giving the characters a tangible reward, but one they can't carry with them. As long as the players feel rewarded for their efforts, repurposing their extra magic items can enrich your games and add depth to the game world.

FINAL THOUGHTS

For all the difficulties a large group can present, you'll find many rewards too. Large groups offer a broader look at all the options available in the game, which allows you to tap into different power sources, races, rituals, and more. You can shape campaigns into sweeping epics, where the characters' stories add detail and flavor to your setting, all to help you explore a wider range of themes, plots, and concepts. When it works, it's just as good as a normal-sized gaming group, but it takes effort and preparation. If you have the luxury of both, try a large group. You might be surprised at the result.

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb is an award-winning game designer whose more recent work can be found in *Martial Power*™ 2, *Draconomicon*™, *Metallic Dragons*, and *Primal Power*™. Robert lives in Tennessee. ✕

THE COLOSSUS OF LAARN

by Mike Mearls

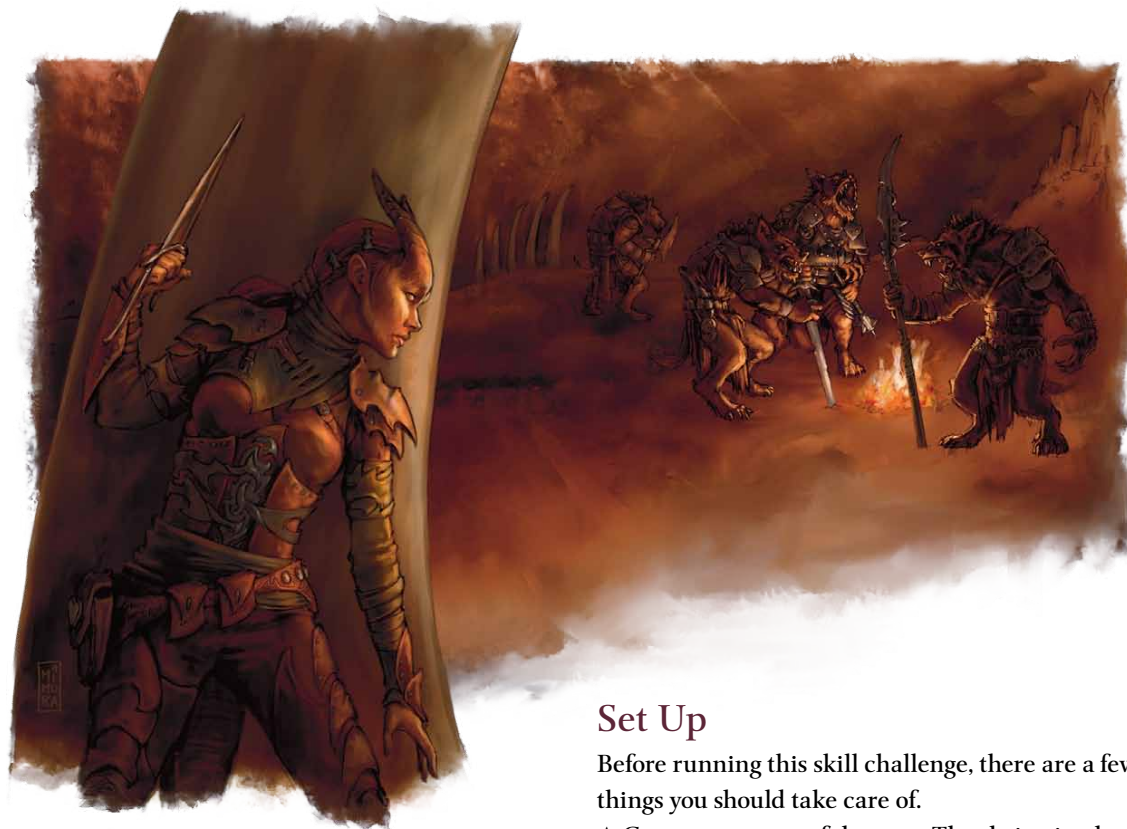
Illustration by Raven Mimura

Last month's sample skill challenge went over well, so let's roll out another one. This skill challenge has a little bit of a twist to it. It's designed to take the place of a combat, with the characters facing off against a monster that they can't defeat by normal means. As with the prior skill challenge, this one lists sample ideas for actions the characters might take and the skills and DCs needed to accomplish them.

SKILL CHALLENGE: THE COLOSSUS OF LAARN

Somewhere within the Chaos Scar stands a shrine to the demon lord Baphomet. The minotaurs that built the shrine are long gone, but their shrine and its treasures remain. The minotaurs offered to Baphomet gold and magic items taken from their victims. A massive treasure chest filled with gold and gems stands behind the altar to Baphomet, tempting adventurers from across the region.

Unfortunately, the treasure is not without its guardian. A massive, hulking construct stands watch over this place. Crafted from impenetrable armor of bronze, the beast is known as the Colossus of Laarn, in honor of the warlock that built it. The colossus is a metal vessel containing the souls of 100 of Baphomet's most devout berserker monks. So long as



the armor remains unbreached, the colossus cannot die. The many bones of its past opponents attest to the near suicidal prospects of facing the thing.

Set Up

Before running this skill challenge, there are a few things you should take care of.

- ◆ Create your map of the area. The shrine is a large cavern with a stone altar and a statue to Baphomet. It is about 30 feet wide. The width is important, because you don't want characters simply walking past the colossus.
- ◆ The magic of the shrine prevents all teleportation.



RULING SKILL CHALLENGES

- ◆ There are four stone pillars in the shrine, near the altar. Each is decorated with bas-relief carvings of minotaur warriors shrouded in flame.
- ◆ Create a hook for the characters to visit the place. Perhaps a magic item they want is known to be held within the temple.
- ◆ Read up on this skill challenge. It differs a bit from the standard format.

Your goal here is to create enough detail that you thoroughly understand the situation. It's easier to improvise if you have a good grasp on the guards, NPCs, traps, and other obstacles.

RUNNING THE SKILL CHALLENGE

This skill challenge works a lot like a battle. The characters enter the shrine and the colossus attacks them. Its stat block (below) shows its base stats without a fixed level. You should set the level to whatever is appropriate for your campaign. By the same token, create a treasure for the shrine as necessary.

This skill challenge has one important twist. Track successes as normal but don't worry about failures. The price of failure is the attacks the colossus makes with its massive axe.

The colossus is presented as a level 10 solo brute, but you can adjust its level up or down as needed. As a rule of thumb, its level should be equal to the skill challenge's level + 5. That gives it the damage and attack accuracy to make it a vicious threat.

The Colossus of Laarn		Level X Solo Brute
Large elemental animate		XP -
Initiative +9	Senses Perception +24; darkvision	
Whirling Axe aura 2; an enemy that ends its turn in the aura suffers 10 damage.		
HP infinite; Bloodied the colossus cannot be bloodied		
AC 23; Fortitude 22, Reflex 18, Will 22		
Saving Throws +5		
Speed 5		
Action Points 2		
⚔ Axe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Reach 2; +13 vs. AC; 4d6 + 5 damage (2d6 + 29 on a critical hit), and the target is knocked prone. Miss: Half damage.		
⬅ Stomp (standard; at-will)		
Burst 5; +11 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 2 damage, and knocked prone. Miss: Half damage.		
⬅ Fiery Breath (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Fire		
Close blast 5; +13 vs. Reflex; 4d6 + 5 fire damage. Miss: Half damage.		
➤ Fiery Bolt (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire		
Ranged 20; +13 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 5 fire damage. Miss: Half damage.		
Legion Mind		
The colossus rolls initiative once for each opponent it faces. It gains a full set of actions on each of its turns.		
Indomitable		
The colossus ignores all damage. If an effect can end with a save, the colossus does not suffer from it. The colossus is immune to all forced movement. If it suffers from an effect that ends at the end of a creatures turn, the effect ends at the end of the colossus's next turn.		
Spell Eater		
If the colossus ends its turn in or adjacent to a zone or conjuration, the zone or conjuration is destroyed.		
Alignment Evil; Languages Common, Primordial		
Skills Perception +24		
Str 22 (+11)	Dex 18 (+9)	Wis 18 (+9)
Con 21 (+10)	Int 5 (+2)	Cha 8 (+4)

The colossus doesn't fight fair, and it's not supposed to. It is a terrifying foe, one that has earned its fearsome reputation by slaying all who are foolish enough to stand against it. There are, however, a few ways in

which the characters can defeat the colossus by using their skills. This is a complexity 5 skill challenge. After 12 successes, the characters destroy the colossus. The methods of destroying it are detailed below.

PRIMARY ACTIONS

When the characters face the colossus, they quickly find that normal attacks have no effect. Instead, they must puzzle out the colossus's nature and the magic of the shrine to defeat it.

Use the hard DCs for each check.

The Pillars: There are four pillars in the back of the shrine, each covered with carvings of minotaur warriors shrouded in flames. The pillars are nexuses of elemental power vital to sustaining the shrine. Destroying them weakens the colossus.

If a pillar is the target of a cold attack or if it is doused in water, its magic fades. Each pillar deactivated in this manner is worth 1 success in the challenge. The characters can earn only one success from each pillar.

Each time the characters earn a success from a pillar, the aura of flame around the pillar disappears and steam erupts from the colossus. After 4 successes, the colossus cannot use its fire attacks.

Arcana: A character adjacent to a pillar can inspect it as a minor action to learn that the pillar is a node of elemental power. Countering the node, either with cold or water, weakens the colossus.

Perception: A character adjacent to the pillar can, as a minor action, notice that the pillar is surrounded by an aura of elemental energy. The aura matches one that surrounds the colossus. The aura resembles a



flame, and whenever the colossus is hit by an attack, the flame flickers.

The Altar: The altar keeps this place consecrated to Baphomet. His unholy magic is required to keep the souls bound in place within the colossus. If the characters destroy the altar, they gain 2 successes in the skill challenge. They earn the first one when the altar is reduced to half its hit points and the other when it is reduced to 0 hit points. The altar has AC and Reflex 4, Fortitude 12, and 8 hit points per level of this challenge.

Each time the characters earn a success from the altar, cracks appear across the colossus's armor.

Nature: The altar is crafted with red-streaked basalt, a rock known as a common receptacle for demonic magic. Destroying it breaks Baphomet's hold over this place.

Religion: Use Athletics for routes that require climbing and jumping or where raw force rather than careful balance is most useful.

The Armor: While Laarn bragged of crafting an unbreakable suit of armor, this is not completely true. Over the years, the punishment it has absorbed has weakened it in a few, key places.

Insight or Thievery: By studying the colossus's fighting stance as a standard action, a character can spot a gouge or other damaged spot in its armor. The colossus stands and fights in a way that protects its weak points, and a keen eye notices that tendency. With a Thievery check, the character can tell the difference between cosmetic and vital damage.

Once a character has spotted a weak point, he can point it out to an ally or use that information himself. The next melee or ranged attack that hits the colossus

grants the characters a success. The characters can gain 6 successes in this manner.

The Souls: As the colossus fights, the souls within it mock the characters. They also fight amongst themselves, as each soul takes turns controlling the colossus. Wily characters can take advantage of this.

Bluff and Intimidate: As a standard action, a character can taunt or bully the colossus. On a successful check, the souls within fight amongst themselves to the detriment of the colossus. Some demand to attack the character who insulted them while others push to ignore it. The strain on the souls slows down the colossus by weakening the magic that propels it. The characters can earn up to 4 successes in this manner.

SECONDARY ACTIONS

This skill challenge lacks secondary options during the challenge, but the characters can attempt to gather information about the colossus before facing it. A Diplomacy or Streetwise check reveals the following, based on the DC the characters beat. The characters learn everything from the DC they hit and all lower ones.

Easy: The colossus has never been defeated. Though it has been damaged, it always repairs itself. I heard the wizard Talmadge say that the magic of the shrine keeps it functioning.

Moderate: Finvara the bard claims that there are many souls sealed within the colossus, and they don't like each other. She crept into the shrine and heard it arguing with itself. Maybe the voices can be turned against each other.

Hard: A few dwarves swore that they knew the secret to destroying the colossus. They left town laden

with waterskins and a keg of fresh water. I never heard from them again, but the dwarves had consulted with Mordenkainen himself! I've never known the archmage to be wrong about anything.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

As noted above, failure in this skill challenge is measured by the colossus's powerful attacks against the characters. They don't accrue failure, but the colossus is a deadly threat to the characters. If they take a long time to defeat it, they risk losing several characters.

Once the characters gain enough successes, the colossus shudders and collapses to the ground in ruins. The souls of a hundred minotaur warriors spill from the wreckage but quickly fade into nothingness. With the colossus gone, the characters are free to loot the shrine.

About the Author

Mike Mearls is the Lead Developer for the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS roleplaying game. His recent credits include H1: *Keep on the Shadowfell* and *Player's Handbook II*.

SAVE MY GAME

MAKE IT A SEASON FOR SHARING

BY STEPHEN RADNEY-MACFARLAND

illustration by Rob Alexander

Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know it sounds corny, but hear me out. There is D&D in this, I swear.

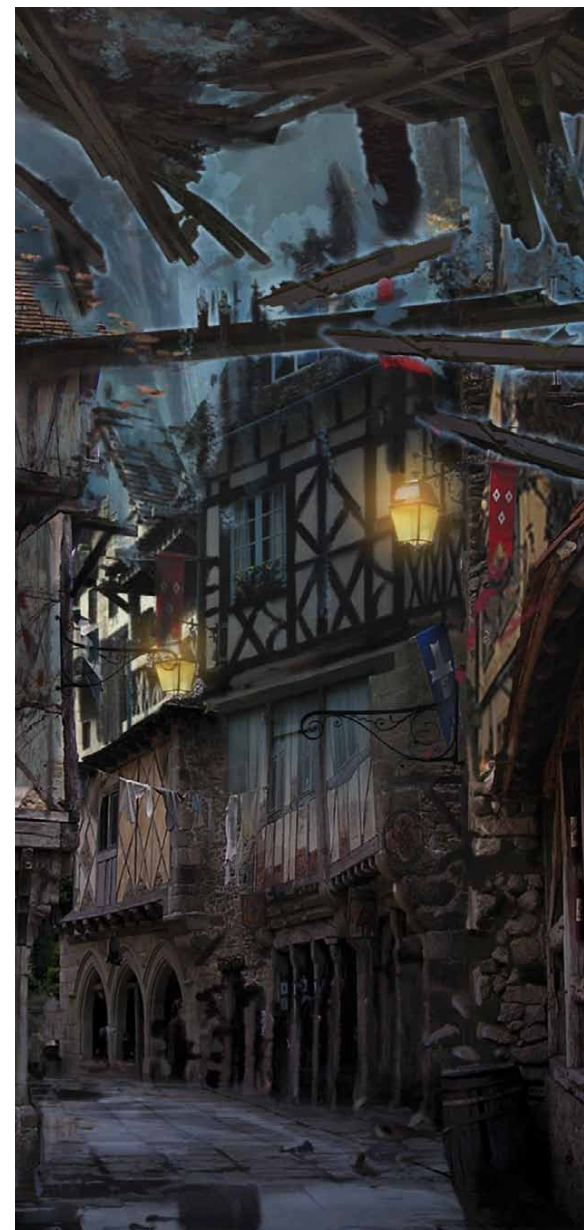
Any given Monday morning in the RPG R&D Development pit, you'll find two or more developers (and maybe a designer or editor or two) sitting around talking about their weekend gaming. While we all love to occasionally video game it up (Dragon Age Origins, Borderlands, and Left4Dead 2 are current favorites) or slide pieces on a board or shuffle some decks (Dominion is the current boxed-game passion for many of us), much of the talk revolves around the last week's DUNGEONS & DRAGONS play. Often, it's through these conversations with my coworkers and fellow DMs that I pick up new DMing tricks and strategies to try out on my unsuspecting players. Many of these same conversations have spurred topics for this very column.

You see, DMing is an art and a science. Sure, you can cloy to the rules and a strong sense of impartiality and muddle on week after week, but becoming a good DM requires more than just these things. To become a good DM, you must practice, you must be willing to experiment at times, be willing to make mistakes, learn from those mistakes, and capitalize on your successes. But you don't need to be a mad scientist working in isolation or a tortured artist shunning the contact of those who don't understand you. You must reflect, and the best way to do that is to have a surface, a sounding board, fellow initiates who will listen, comment, and help.

Every month I try my darnedest to impart good, solid, common sense DMing advice to you all, but that advice rarely comes whole cloth from my mind alone.

I'm privileged to work with some of the best and most thoughtful DMs out there, and both of my current home games are made up of some really dedicated players and DMs who constantly challenge me and my DMing assumptions. All of them have made me a better DM, and I appreciate that.

Lately, my DM sharing circle has expanded. I'm thrilled at the tremendous response that the [Save My Game group](#) on the Wizards of the Coast Community Site has received. What is really exciting about the site is that it is not just a mouthpiece for my opinions and advice for DMing (that's what this column's for, right?). Rather, it is a place where DMs ask questions and other DMs step up and give some really fantastic advice. It's a true conversation about becoming a better DM, and that's fantastic.



Thanks to everyone who posted great questions to the group, and thanks to those who have stepped up and given their own takes on the queries and issues that pop up on that list.

Whether or not you join the Save My Game group, follow one of the fantastic blogs on the web that offers advice, or get together with local friends and DMs to share experience, having a good community of fellows to share and gain feedback from will make you a better Dungeon Master. Go out, find a group, and make sure you share your experiences and gain wisdom from other DMs. Heck, make it your D&D New Year's resolution if you need to.

In the spirit of this, starting next year, Save My Game is going to offer a new feature. As part of the column, I am going to start an Encounter Clinic. Each month I will take a single encounter, critique it, and talk about how to improve it in design and in play. If you would like to submit your encounter for the Clinic, do so via the Save My Game group, where you'll find [a special thread in the group's forum](#). I may just pick your encounter for the first month's clinic!

As promised, this month I'm answering a bunch of questions from you, the readers. Some of the questions were posted on the Save My Game group, others popped up in the mailbag.

JUST LEADER UP, ALREADY!

About 4 months ago, one of my players left our group. He was playing a warlord—the only leader in our group. The players were making their way through the Pyramid of Shadows and I decided to run the warlord as an NPC until they finished the adventure.

During the final epic battle against Karavakos, one of our defenders died ... and so begins my problem.

The player of that character is refusing to play a leader. Now, I'm not one to force any player to play a specific class or role. I think they should play whatever they want to.

My players suggest that I should just continue with the warlord as an extra NPC in the party. I have suggested they just keep playing with whatever party composition they want to, and I'll modify the encounters and the treasure since they don't have a leader, but they don't like that idea.

You see what really bugs me is that as a group they agree that "someone" should play a leader role and that the role is important toward party success, as long as it's not them.

Well, sir, get used to it. Sometimes your players are going to bug you. I think your idea of running the group as is with adjustments to encounter design and treasure distribution is a fine idea. It's substandard, don't get me wrong, but after a session or two of it, your players may get the right idea and someone in

I would probably create one that the PCs will suspect as a spy for their enemies but is actually a spy for some current or future employer (who may turn out to be an enemy at some point). But then I'm devious like that.

the group will finally leader up.

You could also try using the companion character rules from *Dungeon Master's Guide 2* (page 27). These DM-built, player-run leaders can allow an ally to spend a healing surge twice or thrice an encounter, depending on the companion character's level. Creating a companion character with an interesting

background can also be a boon for you, as you can use it to push story threads. I would probably create one that the PCs will suspect as a spy for their enemies but is actually a spy for some current or future employer (who may turn out to be an enemy at some point). But then I'm devious like that.

PROTECTION FROM BLINDSIDING

The PCs in my game recently used the Magic Circle ritual to completely rebuff some enemy hordes I had planned. Half the village was supposed to be destroyed and an NPC was supposed to bravely sacrifice himself. I even wrote his dying monologue. Those darn PCs ruined everything by throwing up a Magic Circle and saving everyone!

It was great to see the players delve into their bag of tricks and pull off something creative and interesting, so I don't begrudge them the victory. Rather, I applaud them, but how can I prepare my game so I'm not blindsided by creative tactics?

It's good that you don't begrudge them their victory. They should be applauded. At the same time, you've committed something I like to call "the novelist's fallacy of roleplaying." You created a vision in your mind of how things were going to be and then were surprised (even a tad frustrated) when events bounded

outside the plan. As a DM, you should always plan not how things will be, but how they could be. Unlike a novelist, a DM writes what is possible within an encounter, and then PCs actualize through play. This is hard, I know. It goes against every storytelling instinct you have and forces you to react to the story when you would prefer to guide the story. Train yourself to think nimbly, take advantage of new situations, and move the story along based on the changing landscape.

For instance, while a Magic Circle may hedge out an entire class of critters of a certain level or lower, it only does so while the circle is intact. It takes only one traitor within the circle to muck it up. Maybe the leader of the horde has an agent on the inside: someone he promised to make lord of the village once his

The problem with comfortable patterns is that, well, they are comfortable. Eventually someone wants to sow their proverbial wild oats and shake things up a bit (often that person is the DM).

horde's hunger for destruction and loot is sated.

Another option would allow the leader of the horde to call upon a powerful ally of an origin the Magic Circle has no effect on. Maybe the horde leader is loathe to do it because it would put him under the thumb of this powerful ally sometime in the future, but necessity breeds compromise.

Yet another option is to find a way to lure the characters or some of the NPCs out of the Magic Circle, thereby creating a new source of conflict. Maybe the characters missed some villagers and must leave the

circle to rescue them. Maybe a mother leaves the circle to rescue a child she thought was lost.

In the end, counter your players' flash of brilliance with improvisation and a new challenge. Never negate their accomplishments (that will just frustrate them) but find a way to transform them into a new, exciting dilemma that pushes the story forward.

SHAKING IT UP

I'm looking to make my sessions a bit more varied. Right now, they consist of roleplaying followed by a combat encounter followed by more roleplaying.

I know I have players who like the out-of-combat stuff, but I have a hard time doing anything outside of just roleplaying. How can I push them into new areas of game play?

Well, there is nothing wrong with finding your group's particular groove. Long-running games, like any long-term relationship, often fall into a comfortable pattern. The problem with comfortable patterns is that, well, they are comfortable. Eventually someone wants to sow their proverbial wild oats and shake things up a bit (often that person is the DM).

What's difficult is getting others to want to shake things up. First, talk to your players. Identify the rut and see whether they are open to trying new things. Second, think about starting a new game for a while.

This can be helpful if your group is a long-running one. Players are not always open to experimenting with well loved and well worn characters. You can use that new game to let them try out new game structures. If they like it, you'll find they'll be more willing to try those things in your long-running game.

Looking back at my advice, I'm glad I'm talking about campaigns and play styles here. If I was talking about anything else, my wife would want to have a long talk with me. And that talk would involve a shoe to the side of my head.

THE TREASURE MIX

If I am using the treasure parcel system, about what percentage or ratio of magic items should be wondrous items like rope of climbing and what percentage should be things that go directly into defense and accuracy?

Let's take a look. The three magic item slots you definitely want to not skimp on are armor, primary weapon/implement, and neck. Start skimping on those, and your players will start complaining that they are not hitting often enough or they're getting hit too often. Assuming that you should replace those things roughly every five or six levels, and that characters should be getting a new magic item by some method every level, gives you two or three magic items that can go into other slots, including those fun wondrous slots. On average, I budget a number of wondrous or whacky items per tier equal to the number of characters. But to be honest, I often give out two or even three times that number.

The way I see it, those items are just fun. They rarely affect combat or your typical skill challenge,

and players like to find creative uses for them, so giving them out at half or even one-third the cost of other magic items shouldn't cause serious disruptions to your game. In short, each tier, you can safely give each character one from the parcels. If you want, you can give out up to one or two others that don't count toward the parcels.

HELP WITH THE NOOBs

I've been playing D&D for a while, and recently converted my long-running game to the 4e rules.

I've recently recruited two players completely new to D&D by running some of the simple adventures from Dungeon magazine to teach them the ropes, and wouldn't mind having them join my main campaign, but I'm worried. How do I smooth their transition into a long-running game with 40+ session worth of storyline?

When transitioning new players into your long-running game, do your best to integrate them into the storyline. They are going to feel like interlopers for the first few sessions, and not integrating them into the campaign's story will make it harder for them to become equals. If you have the gumption, write up a summary of what's gone before in the campaign. Don't make it too long or they won't read it. Hit the high spots, list the most important NPCs, tantalize

them with a couple of details, and let them know what the other characters are up to at the point when the new players enter the campaign. If you don't have the time to do a write up, sit down with them for a character creation session and tell them in person—or maybe invite the other players to tell them. Players love to give their take on story, enemies, and their characters, and may even come up with ideas on how the new characters can enter the storyline.

Lastly, though you may be tempted to do this, don't have the new characters work toward purposes counter to the old characters. It may seem like a fun way to create story tension, but it works against integrating new players into the game, teaches them the wrong lesson about D&D, and sends the wrong message to your existing players.

About the Author

Born on a stormy Christmas day, in our nation's capital, during the Nixon administration, the stars were definitely wrong when **Stephen Radney-MacFarland** came screaming into the world. Spending most of his impressionable years as a vagabond and ne're-do-well, Stephen eventually settled in the Northwest to waste his life on roleplaying games.

Stephen teaches a class on roleplaying design for the Art Institute of Seattle, molding the minds of young and upcoming designers. Be afraid. Be very afraid.

DUNGEON DRESSING

BY JAMES WYATT

illustration by Wayne England

I've been part of a number of conversations recently about improvised actions in D&D. One phenomenon we observed early in the life of this edition of the game was that, when presented with a list of powers, players tended not to consider options that didn't appear on that list. Some players felt that their options were actually more limited in the game than they had been in past editions, because they didn't allow themselves to think past the power cards. I remember starting off a demo game I ran at D&D Experience in 2008 (a few months before the release of the core rules) by reminding the group that it's still D&D, and they could still try anything they could think of.

But the perception remains, and that leads to conversations about what we can do to counteract it. I think there are a number of categories of improvised actions that players are likely to attempt, but one big category boils down to interacting with the environment. Certain types of players, at least, pay a lot of attention to the dungeon map, and when considering their options for a turn, they're as likely to look at the braziers and fire pits and strangely glowing orbs as at their power cards. (I think a lot of instigators fall into that category.)

Terrain powers, presented in *Dungeon Master's Guide*® 2, are a great tool to allow those players cool options for interacting with the environment. Pushing over a wall onto an enemy, tipping over a table full of alchemical reagents to create an explosion (while taking cover behind the table), shooting down a chandelier to drop on your enemies—these are classic improvised actions, and with the release of *DMG2*, the game has some solid rules to cover them.

I recently built a dungeon map entirely out of Dungeon Tiles, and I think the most important step in designing that dungeon was the last one: I went through my collection of dungeon dressing tiles and sprinkled them liberally throughout the dungeon. So one room has a big pool of water and two smaller basins, another has runes on the floor, a third has crates and cartons and a huge urn full of elemental fire, and so on. Those elements add tremendous life to the dungeon and made writing each individual encounter in the dungeon a lot more interesting.

Because of the season, I think of dungeon dressing a little bit like decorating the house for the holidays. You don't want to overdo it, but putting a little touch of decoration in each room is not too much.



In the dungeon I designed recently, every room has something in it to explore or fiddle around with. Page 111 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* lists a bunch of “furnishings and features” you might place in a dungeon room, and the 1-by-1 and 2-by-2 tiles in any Dungeon Tiles set include a wide variety of similar kinds of elements. The trick is figuring out what those elements can do.

Some features can have a significant impact in combat, while others are things the players can poke around with once the encounter is over. Terrain powers and fantastic terrain cover that first category pretty well, so what I want to focus on is the latter kind of dungeon dressing: cool and interesting dungeon elements that reward player exploration and improvisation.

WEIRD MAGICAL EFFECTS

I started this column talking about how hard it can be to encourage players to think beyond their lists of powers. Well, it can be just as much of a challenge to get Dungeon Masters and adventure designers to do the same thing. One of the beauties of the game is that you don't need rules for how weird effects come to be: If you want runes in your dungeon to bestow a minor blessing from one of the gods to characters who meditate on them, you don't need to know what divine prayer or ritual is in effect. You can just make it happen. But since no such power or ritual appears in the game, you might never think to do it, and there's no clear guideline for what's appropriate.

One good way to think about weird effects is to treat them as consumable magic items. Dipping your sword in a pool of water in the dungeon might have the same effect as a magic whetstone (whose level is within 4 levels of the characters' level) described in

Adventurer's Vault™. Drinking from a magic fountain might have the same effect as any magic potion. Each of these might function only once, once per day, or once for any individual character.

Weird effects can help characters in more significant ways as well. A magic pool in the [free Eberron adventure *Khyber's Harvest*](#) allows a short rest to function as an extended rest—basically providing a way for the characters to press on through the dungeon in one delve. There's no real weight to that in terms of game rules, though it certainly looks like there is. All the pool really does is hand-wave the story of the adventure so that characters can get six hours of rest in five minutes, the better to save the townsfolk in time.

I put a pool in my dungeon that allows the characters to catch a brief glimpse of another encounter in the dungeon, randomly determined, if they gaze into its waters (and make a successful Arcana check). The only benefit the characters get from that is the ability to feel slightly more prepared for a future encounter—which might be significant, even if only psychologically.

You don't need to reduce the actual treasure the

You can use weird magical effects like these to set the characters up for an upcoming encounter that might be a little tough for them. If they warm themselves by a magical fire that gives them resist cold 5 for an hour just before they go fight a white dragon, that can significantly change the odds in their favor.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Another great use for dungeon dressing is to seed quests and story hooks for future adventures. What does that statue in the corner do? Well, nothing—but if a character squeezes behind it and looks at the back, there's writing there that presents a mystery to be solved. There's no magical or mundane benefit to be gained but plenty of opportunity to present adventure opportunities to your players.

Dungeon dressing is a great way to lay seeds for the adventures you have planned. If you know something about the adventure you're going to run next, look for ways to plant hooks in the adventure you're running now that will naturally draw the players onward. Those hooks could be as blatant as a teleportation circle that leads to the next dungeon or as subtle as a dropped name written in a book or

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characters find to account for rewards presented as dungeon dressing. They're freebies, extra rewards for putting in the effort to explore the environment. Besides, the characters don't have the luxury of choosing when to use them.

scrawled on the back of a statue that the players will encounter again later.

Adventure seeds can take the form of weird magical effects, too. Maybe the characters gazing into the pool of water don't see an encounter in the dungeon they're in but sees the denizens of the next dungeon

they'll be visiting, or some other clue leading them on to further adventures. Maybe an angelic vision appears over an ancient altar and delivers a message that spurs the characters to their next quest.

STORY BACKGROUND

The best dungeon dressing, whatever purpose it serves in the game, is rooted in the story of the dungeon. If the characters are exploring the ruins of an ancient temple built by minotaurs, then an altar dedicated to Erathis teaches them something about the minotaurs who built the temple even while it's bestowing Erathis's blessing on those who spend a short rest in prayer before it.

In my Greenbrier game, I've been working a lot with the idea that the magical energies that imprisoned the Speaker in Dreams were focused at altars scattered around what is now the chasm, with each altar dedicated to a different deity. Purifying the altars has been a theme of the characters' first forays into the chasm. I can use that background to create additional dungeon dressing that will reinforce the story I'm trying to tell with these adventures.

We haven't played in a long while, since things have been very busy around here, but right now the characters are about to embark on a delve to find and purify the altar of Corellon, which is in a swampy section of cavern inhabited by bullywugs. How can I add dungeon dressing to that delve to reward the players for poking around? Here are some thoughts:

- ◆ A statue of Corellon within the dungeon gives a minor blessing to anyone who spends a short rest in meditation before it: Until the end of the next encounter, the character deals +1 damage with arcane powers.

- ◆ A pool in the caverns is surprisingly clean and clear compared to the surrounding bog. A character who bathes in it regains a spent healing surge and is cured of any disease.
- ◆ An inscription on the wall (perhaps hidden behind a thick growth of moss) describes observations taken from the top of the tower at Tower Watch, pointing characters in that direction for their next adventures.

Dungeon dressing isn't the most exciting part of adventure design, and it might involve some preparation that never pays off. But done well, it rewards players with several different motivations: instigators who like poking and prodding at the environment, explorers who want to learn more about the world, thinkers who enjoy puzzling out mysteries, storytellers who are keen on the story of the game, and even power gamers who love collecting small game benefits for their characters. For such a fine detail in the process of adventure design, that's a lot of payoff.

About the Author

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